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Understanding Advaita Vedanta

Understanding Advaita Vedanta

What is Advaita Vedanta

Updated on 14th Aug 2016

[Part I, Page 1 - What is Advaita Vedanta](#)

Namaste,

This is Page 1/10 of Part I.

This section attempts to correctly project Advaita.

Explains basic concept of Advaita along with common terminology and definition of basic terms used in advaita, as defined by Adi Shankara in his PrakaraNa grantha-s.

It also goes into subtler details, in brief, which can be useful for sincere advaitins who regularly meditate for attaining moksha.

[Table Of Contents](#)

Welcome to New Interface. All content is transferred ...

... Read More



Understanding Advaita Vedanta

[Saguna Brahman \(सगुण ब्रह्म\) - Ishvara \(इश्वर\)](#)

[Position of Ishvara in Advaita](#)

[mAyA and mithyA \(माया, मिथ्या\)](#)

[Applying mithyA \(मिथ्या\)](#)

[nitya and anitya \(नित्य-अनित्य\)](#)

[VairAgya and doSa-darshan \(वैराग्य - दोष दर्शन, Dispassion and fault finding\)](#)

[Jiva \(जीव\)](#)

[Why I am not Jiva?](#)

[Aham 'I' and AhamkAra 'I-ness', 'I am Doer', 'Ego'](#)

[Atman](#)

[Relation between Jiva, Ishvara and Brahman](#)

[Ishvara SrUShTI and jIva SrUShTI \(ईश्वर सृष्टि, जीव सृष्टि\)](#)

[Jiva SrUShTI \(जीव सृष्टि\) is the cause of bondage](#)

[What is the root cause of suffering?](#)

[moksha \(मोक्ष, moxa\)](#)

[Three Types of vAsanA-s \(वासना, Desires\) and their renunciation](#)

[Is Brahman really deluded?](#)

[Three Levels of Truths](#)

[VyavahArika Satya](#)

[PrAtibhAsika Satya](#)

[PArAmArthika Satya](#)

[Explanation for Brahman getting deluded?](#)

[Jivanmukti and Videha Mukti](#)

[V i n to Surrender?](#)

[Why Theory of Advaita is right](#)

Welcome to New Interface. All content is transferred ...

... Read More

Understanding Advaita Vedanta

vAda-s - Theories of Creation

[Arambha vAda](#)

[pariNAMA vAda](#)

[Vivarta vAda](#)

[ajAta vAda](#)

mahAvAkya-s

Is Advaita for everybody?

[Who can teach Brahma-Vidya?](#)

[Advaitins never compare capacity of Jnani with avatAra](#)

[Advaita asks one to rise above dvaita](#)

sAdhana CatuShTa varNana (four qualities to practice advaita)

Snake- Rope Analogy - A perfect example to explain Advaita

TruNa-Jantu NyAya and Keet-Bramar NyAya

[1. Truna-Jantu Nyaya \(Caterpillar law\)](#)

[2. Keet-Bramar Nyaya](#)

Subtle Points

Ishwara does not depend upon anything 'Else' for creation of universe

Three Paths

[ajAta vAda: Moksha - a mahabranti \(great illusion\)](#)

Vachyartha and Laxyartha

[But we have heard so much about mAyA \(maayaa\). Why is mAyA talked too much?](#)

Subtle points for sincere advaita meditators.

Unadeshas are given from AdhikAra bheda

(i)

[adhyAropa apavAda - Only Consistent Traditional Teaching of Adi Shankara BhagavadpAda](#)

Welcome to New Interface. All content is transferred ...

... Read More

Understanding Advaita Vedanta

[Reason behind Shrutis, Smritis and Puranas praising one Personal deity](#)

Salutations to Param Guru - Guru Gita

Let us begin with salutations to our Guru who is none other than Sat-Chit-Anand Atma / Brahman

यस्य प्रसादादहमेव सर्वं मय्येव सर्वं परिकल्पितं च ।

इत्थं विजानामि सदात्मरूपं तस्यांग्रिपदं प्रणतोऽस्मि नित्यम् ॥

By whose grace that one realizes "I am everything, everything is superimposed in me, I offer my salutations and worship to my self-realised Satguru's lotus feet. (215)

कुलं धनं बलं शास्त्रं बान्धवास्सौदरा इमे ।

मरणे नोपयुज्यन्ते गुरुरेको हि तारकः ॥

Family traditions, wealth, strength, shastras, relatives, brothers, - none of these are useful to you at the time of death. Satguru is the only saviour. (188)

अज्ञानतिमिरान्धस्य विषयाक्रान्तचेतसः ।

ज्ञानप्रभाप्रदानेन प्रसादं कुरु मे प्रभो ॥

O Lord, by the gift of the light of knowledge, may Thy blessings be bestowed on me, whose eyes are covered by the cataracts of ignorance, and whose mind is captured by sense pleasure. (216)

[Refer Glories of Param Guru](#)



[What is Advaita Vedanta](#)

Welcome to New Interface. All content is transferred ...

... Read More



Understanding Advaita Vedanta

of senses, mind and beyond the realm of maya (illusion).

A + Dvaita (अ + द्वैत) = Advaita

Dvaita (द्वैत) = Duality,

A-Dvaita = not- duality = non-duality

Vedanta means the end parts of Vedas, which contains the essence of Vedas. Here the end part is to be taken as essence and not literally 'end' part.

Hence, Advaita Vedanta can be defined as a marg (path) which teaches the essence of vedas that there is one supreme reality (non-dual) - NirguNa Brahman (निर्गुण ब्रह्म).

Advaita Vedanta teaches that this world is transient, temporary, adobe of sorrows, and mithya (मिथ्या). It is due to the power of God's Maya (illusion) that this world looks different than Brahman. Brahman alone is reality.

Advaita asks one to raise from Sharira bhava (शरीर भाव) to Jiva bhava (जीव भाव) to Atma Bhava (आत्म भाव). According to Advaita, Jiva (जीव) and Shiva (शिव, brahman, ब्रह्म) are not different. Entire advaita can be summed up in half verse as

ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः - ब्रह्म ज्ञानावलीमाला - २०

Brahma Satyam Jagan Mithya Jivo Brahmaiva Na Aparah" - Brahma Jnanavali mala- 20

Brahman (ब्रह्म, the Absolute) is alone real; this world is unreal; the Jiva (जीव) or the individual soul is non-different from Brahman (ब्रह्म).

The full verse is

ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः

अनेन वेद्यं सच्छास्त्रमिति वेदान्तदिण्डिमः - - ब्रह्म ज्ञानावलीमाला - २०

brahma satyam jaganmithya jIvo brahmaiva nAparah

anena vedyam sacchAstram iti vedAntaDiNDimah—*Brahma Jnanavali mala- 20*

20. Brahman (ब्रह्म) is real, the universe is mithya (मिथ्या), it cannot be categorized as either real or unreal. The jiva (जीव) is Brahman (ब्रह्म) itself and not different. This should be understood as the correct SAstra (शास्त्र). This is proclaimed by Vedanta.

This half verse is also found in nirAlambopanishad:

ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः (निरालम्बोपनिषद - २८)

"l i ma Satyam Jagan Mithya Jivo Brahmaiva Na Aparah" - nirAlambopaniShada - 28 (Niraalamba Upanishad - 28)

Welcome to New Interface. All content is transferred ...

... Read More



Understanding Advaita Vedanta

satyam. This Jagat satyam is not from dual point, but from atma sthiti (आत्मस्थिति). It is conveyed by another mahAvAkya (महावाक्य), sarvam khalu-idam brahma (सर्वं खलु इदं ब्रह्म) i.e. everything else is (also) brahman.

Important concepts of Advaita Vedanta that one frequently comes across are

1. Brahman Satyam
2. Jagat MithyA
3. Jiva and Brahman are not Different
4. Brahman due to it's mAyA (माया) appears as this world.
5. Everything else is also Brahman
6. Atman is Sat-Chit-Ananda and not different from Brahman.

Basic Concepts of Advaita in Points

Talking in more detail, here are some basic concepts of advaita:

1. Brahman is the only reality i.e. Truth is one. (ekam Sat - Rig Veda 1.164.46)
2. Brahman is beyond 3 guna-s (त्रिगुणातीत), time, space, mAyA (माया), and 5 senses.
3. Brahman is one without a second. There is no duality in Brahman (ब्रह्म).
4. Brahman is without beginning and end.
5. Brahman is indescribable, indivisible, undivided, peaceful, immutable, infinite, subtlest and omnipresent.
6. Brahman is nirAkAra (निराकार).
7. Brahman is Sat-Chit-Ananda Svarupa (सच्चिदानन्द स्वरूप).
8. Brahman is jnana Svarupa (ज्ञान स्वरूप).
9. Brahman has independent existence and does not depend upon anything else.
10. Brahman when working through mAyA (माया), it's illusionary power, is called as saguNa brahman (सगुण ब्रह्म) or Ishwara (ईश्वर).
11. mAyA (माया) is mithyA (मिथ्या) i.e. it is neither real nor completely unreal. Though it is unreal, it appears to be real.
12. Both Ishwara and Jiva have upAdhi-s (उपाधि)
13. Ishwara (SaguNa Brahman, सगुण ब्रह्म) is not different than Brahman (ब्रह्म) and is not under the spell of mAyA (माया) i.e. bound by mAyA (माया) whom Ishwara controls.
14. mAyA (माया) does not have independent existence. It depends upon and rest upon Brahman (ब्रह्म).
15. Jiva is the same Brahman which associates itself with avidhA mAyA (अविधा माया) i.e. panchamahAbhuta (पञ्चमहाभूत).
16. Ishwara has 6 upAdhi-s (उपाधि), but is not bound by it.
17. When upAdhi-s (उपाधि) of both jiva (जीव) and Ishwara (ईश्वर) are removed, what is left is NirguNa Brahman (निर्गुण ब्रह्म) or simply Brahman (ब्रह्म).
18. Perceiving duality (द्वैत) is due to error in perception. Technically Jiva (जीव) is not different than Shiva

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... Read More

Understanding Advaita Vedanta

and pArmArthIk satya (पारमाथक सत्य)

22. Jiva was never separated from Brahman as Brahman is indivisible.

24. mAyA (माया) or jiva (जीव) or jagat (जगत) does cease to exist in nirvikalpa samAdhi (निर्विकल्प समाधि). In other words, existence of mAyA (माया), jiva (जीव) and jagat (जगत) are negated in nirvikalpa samAdhi (निर्विकल्प समाधि)

25. Jnana (ज्ञान) cannot be given as one is already Brahman (ब्रह्म). Atman (आत्मा) is Brahman (ब्रह्म). Only ajnana (अज्ञान, ignorance) can be removed.

26. Though mAyA (माया) is beginning-less (अनादि) it's ends in Jnana (ज्ञान) i.e. it's existence is negated in nirvikalpa samAdhi (निर्विकल्प समाधि).

27. Existence of Jiva is not eternal.

28. After negation of what is 'not this' Neti-Neti (नेति-नेति) i.e. Na-iti - Na-iti (न-इति - न-इति) meaning 'not-this, not-this', *that which is not atman (आत्मा) or is different than 'I' (अहम्)*, only pure consciousness remains.

To explain these concepts, Adi Shankara out of compassion created prakaraNa grantha-s (प्रकरण ग्रन्थ). PrakaraNa grantha-s are introductory texts that give definitions of key concepts of Advaita (अद्वैत). Other than Adi Shankara, his disciples and successors have also created some prakaraNa grantha-s and written commentaries (bashya-s, भाष्य) and annotations (vArttika, वार्तिक). Others have named commentary as dipikA (दिपिका) or chandrikA (चन्द्रिका), some call it as bhava prakAsha (भाव प्रकाश). Sub commentary is called as laghu dipikA (लघु दिपिका), as used by some recent commentators.

Tatva Bodh (तत्त्व बोध) is the first text that should be referred. Later Vivek Chudamani (विवेक चुणामणि) should be referred. Atma Bodh (आत्म बोध), aparokshAnubhuti (अपरोक्षानुभूति) is also very useful. PanchAdashi (पंचादशी) by vidyAraNya Swami (विद्यारण्य स्वामी) is considered as manual of advaita. Other prakaraNa grantha-s are Naishkarmya Siddhi (नैष्कर्म्य सिद्धि) by SureshvarAchArya (सुरेश्वराचार्य) and vAkya vritti (वाक्य वृत्ति) by Adi Shankara.

Tatva Bodh (तत्त्व बोध) defines basic concepts and terms used in advaita (अद्वैत). It answers questions like

What is Jiva (जीव)

What is Atman (आत्मा)

What is Brahman (ब्रह्म)

What is Mithya (मिथ्या)

What is Nitya (नित्य) and a-nitya (अनित्य)

What is satya (सत्य) and a-satya (असत्य)

PanjikaraNa prakriyA (पञ्जीकरण प्रक्रिया) - creation of this world, bodies - gross (sthUla, स्थूल शरीर) and subtle (sUkshma, सूक्ष्म शरीर), mana (मन), antakaraNa (अन्तःकरण) etc are explained.

(i)

Vivek Chudamani. though a prakaraNa grantha (प्रकरण ग्रन्थ) is very long comprising of 582 sloka-s (verses).

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Atman / Brahman. Hence he meditates with ananya bhAva (अनन्य भाव), i.e. I am not different from Brahman. (अ+anya = अ+अन्य = अनन्य. a +anya = ananya, not+different = not-different).

Followers of advaita practice meditation on Aum / Om or practice Self Enquiry as prescribed by Sri Ramana Maharshi.

sAdhaka-s are requested to study these prakaraNa granth-s before taking up Bhagavad Gita. This is necessary to understand Gita from Advaita standpoint. Since you will find the explanation of basic terminology and concepts from these books, detailed explanation is not intended here. Lets understand these terms in brief. References from Shastras may be given in future if time permits.

Some key words in Advaita are:

Brahman or nirguNa Brahman (ब्रह्म, निर्गुण ब्रह्म)

Ishwara or saguNa Brahman (ईश्वर, सगुण ब्रह्म)

mAyA and mithyA (माया, मिथ्या)

jagat (जगत)

jIva (जीव)

Atma or Atman (आत्मा)

nitya-anitya (नित्य - अनित्य)

moksha (मोक्ष)

Three types of vAsanA-s (वासना) and their renunciations

Three levels of truth: vyavahArika satya, prAtibhAsika satya and pArmArthika satya.

Jivanmukti and Videha Mukti

Lets take understand one by one.

Brahman (ब्रह्म)

Advaita defines two Brahman, saguNa (सगुण) and nirguNa (निर्गुण). When simply written 'brahman' it means nirguNa brahman.

NirguNa brahman (निर्गुण ब्रह्म)

NirguNa brahman is a considered as formless, indivisible, unchanging, attributeless, beyond mAyA and peaceful. Brahman is Sat-Chit-Anand

H ⁱ people wrongly interpret the word nirguNa (attributeless) as sunya (zero) or void or blank. Brahman is not a negative state. Upon careful study of Gita and Upanishads, it can be understood that brahman is

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[... Read More](#)

Understanding Advaita Vedanta

above duality and abide in Brahman. The knower of Brahman is none other than Brahman itself.

Here nirguNa brahman is not to be considered as negative. It is ananda svarupa (आनंद स्वरूप), but you are not different to experience it. Hence the word non-dual is used to indicate that there is no duality of observer (दृष्टा, witness) and object of observation (दृश्य). To observe, witness, experience or see anything one has to be conscious of it. e.g. to see a car, your consciousness has to be in the physical body, else if you are day dreaming, even if car is in front of you, you cannot see it. In the same way to experience or be a witness, consciousness has to be present i.e. one has to be aware of 'object of observation'. Hence there is duality. After the object of observation has merged into observer only pure consciousness remains. But how can the object merge. Because it is just a mental projection, a false perception due to illusion of mAyA (माया). When one knows the art of discriminating real and unreal and see the source, one sees Brahman everywhere. Hence it is said that the knower of Brahman is not different than Brahman itself. Hence it is said that sarvam khalu idam Brahman (सर्वं खलु इदं ब्रह्म) - whatever else you see is also Brahman or everything (else) is Brahman. It is not different from you, it is not separate from you. If it is made of same material as you are but yet you are different, then it would falsify the definition of Brahman being indivisible and immutable. Hence you cannot say that 'I am the part and Brahman is full'. The concept of qualitatively same but quantitatively different will violate shruti and hence cannot be accepted.

If you say that - this is a rose flower. It means that you are not rose flower. Hence you are different than rose flower. In the same way when you say that 'Hi, I am Amrut', you use the word 'I' and not 'this'. Please note the difference. Here 'I' is associated with physical body, as our consciousness is strongly associated with physical body. Hence we do not say that 'This is Amrut' (even though recently we do say - this is Amrut, is grammatically incorrect)

Anything that is not you is pointed as 'This', which is said as 'idam' in Sanskrit. The path of Advaita is self enquiry. It is called as path of negation - 'Neti - Neti' (नेति - नेति). nA-iti, nA-iti (न-इति, न-इति) means 'not this, not this'. **Idea is to separate or dis-associate or detach 'I' from that is not 'I'. Hence it is called as path of negation (of non self). Please note that one cannot negate oneself. One cannot deny one's own existence as any time.** 'I' cannot be negated, only that is different from 'I' can be negated. After negating which is '*not you*', like peeling off layers of onion, what is left is emptiness, just you. Empty means nothing more remains to be negated. Now nothing that can be seen is left. In other words, there is no 'drashya padArtha' (दृश्य पदार्थ, visible object or object of observation). Kindly note that in this process, observer is not negated, hence only the observer remains.

Let us understand this with the help of another example.

Name and form are interconnected. There is no form, which does not have a name and there is no name which does not have a form. Brahman is called so only for understanding and explanatory purpose. The moment we here name of object, we visualize its shape. For example - 'Tree'. As soon as I speak the word 'Tree', a shape appears in front of you. A small demonstration will help understand better. When I say, '*This is a mango tree*', mango tree appears in front of you. Now remove, the name which is '*mango tree*'.

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[... Read More](#)

Understanding Advaita Vedanta

consciousness. Consciousness is the one which is responsible for any knowledge. In other words consciousness has the quality or nature of giving knowledge. Hence Atman is also called as PrakAsh-svarUpa (प्रकाश स्वरूप, of nature of light). Light also has nature of giving knowledge. We want to find our wrist watch, but cannot find it as the room is dark. When you switch on light, you can locate your wrist watch. Light has nature of giving knowledge. It should be noted that Atman is not light, but of nature of light in a sense that both light and Atman has nature of giving. In other words, Atman is responsible for any kind of knowledge.

Kindly note that the observer himself is not negated, only object of observation is negated. It is said that in Jnana driSTi (ज्ञान दृष्टि) i.e. in state of Atma- Jnana, samsAra (संसार) is negated. Please note that the word used is 'negated' and not 'destroyed'.

Hence one reaches to a conclusion, 'Aham brahmAsmi' (अहं ब्रह्मास्मि) meaning 'I am Brahman' - a mahavakya. Since this 'I' is nothing but pure consciousness, it reflects another mahAakya - PrajnAnam Brahma (प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म) meaning 'consciousness is brahman'. You began this journey by being in duality and you thought that 'I' is different from Brahman, Hence Guru instructs you into a mahAvAkya 'tat tvam asi' (तत् त्वम् असि) meaning 'That though art' meaning 'you are that Brahman'. After negating what is *not* 'I', 'I' merges with Brahman. Individual ego merges in Brahman loses it's individual identity. One concludes that 'I' i.e. Self i.e. 'Atman is Brahman' i.e. 'ayamAtmA brahma' (अयमात्मा ब्रह्म) - another mahAvAkya. (Sri Ramana Maharshi says that after Ego dissolves, another 'I-I' springs up spontaneously. But this is not ego. it is pUrNa vastu (पूर्ण वस्तु, completeness). Hence this 'I' is called as Atman (which is none other than Brahman.)

These 4 mahavakyas talk about the unity and oneness of Atman, Jiva, and Brahman (आत्मन्, जीव, ब्रह्मन्). Note that here JIva and Atman are used interchangeably. While Jiva stands for Individual Soul, Atman simply means 'I' or 'Self'. This 'I' is associated with Body, precisely 5 kosha-s (पञ्च कोश, 5 bodies), namely

anna-maya kosha (अन्नमयकोश, physical body),
prANa-maya kosha (प्राणमयकोश, energy body),
mano-maya kosha (मनोमयकोश, mental body - mana, मन),
vigyAna-maya kosha (विज्ञानमयकोश, causal body, ego, sthuLa sharira (स्थूल शरीर), karaNa sarira (कारण शरीर), linga sarira (लिंग शरीर), linga deha (लिंग देह), jivAtmA (जीवात्मा) , antakaraNa (अन्तःकरण) and
ananda-maya kosha (आनन्दमयकोश, buddhi body or body of bliss).

The Atman (आत्मन्) is beyond these 5 kosha-s (पञ्चकोशाः).

When 'I' i.e. Atman or Self associates with 5 bodies and identifies itself as body due to ego, it is called as jiva (जीव). When this 'I' associates with Brahman, it becomes Brahman (in dual tone we can say, it experiences itself as brahman)

(i)

After entering into nirvikalp samAdhi (निर्विकल्प समाधि), mind becomes dormant and goes to sleep. But it

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[... Read More](#)

Understanding Advaita Vedanta

From one side one feels as it usually is not Brahman in other words, one feels it is not different from Brahman. One is said to have separated milk from water. mAyA (water, माया) is separated from Brahman (ब्रह्म). This reflects another mahAvAkya - 'sarvam khalu idam brahma' (सर्वं खलु इदं ब्रह्म) meaning 'Everything else is (also) Brahman'

Without mind, there is no ego, without ego, there is no mind. One ceases to exist in absence of another.

sAdhaka (साधक, disciple, seeker) begins with duality, as one is in duality, later on finds relation with Supreme Brahman and finally ends up being Supreme Brahman. Hence there are three type of Shrutis (upanishads) - Bheda shruti (भेद श्रुति), ghaTaka shruti (घटक श्रुति) and a-bheda shruti (अभेद श्रुति).

bheda shruti (भेद श्रुति):

Bheda means difference. bheda shruti, as the name suggests talks of jiva and Brahman or ishvara as different. At times Atman is interchangeably used with jiva by non-advaita acharyas.

a-bheda shruti (अभेद श्रुति):

a+bheda = abheda (अ + भेद = अभेद).

not+different = non-different or non-dual.

Shrutis falling under this category declare one-ness of Atman and Brahman.

ghaTaka shruti (घटक श्रुति):

The link joining bheda and abheda is called as ghaTaka shruti. They explain the link between jivAtma (जीवात्मा) and paramAtmA (परमात्मा) or antaryAmin (अन्तर्यामी). They are so-called as they synthesize superficially contradictory passages in vedas and upanishads.

saguNa brahman (सगुण ब्रह्म) - Ishvara (ईश्वर)

When Brahman does the work of creation, preservation and destruction with the help of his mAyA (माया), Brahman (ब्रह्म) is called as saguNa brahman (सगुण ब्रह्म). sa-guNa means with guna-s (गुण). To do anything, i.e. to act, one has to possess guNa-s (गुण). Possessing guNa-s (गुण) does not mean Ishwara is bound by them. Advaita considers all forms of saguNa Brahman i.e. Ishwara or Bhagavan as equal. So for an advaitin, rAma, krishNa, Shiva, nArAyaNa, Brahma, gaNesha, skanda, Adi Shakti are all same, as they re (i) sent one and same Brahman.

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... Read More

Understanding Advaita Vedanta

(dispassion). Though Ishvara is eternal, he is called so as he is connected with mAyA. Without mAyA, he is NirguNa Brahman. Ishvara, his glories and works attributed to him (creation, preservation and destruction) have to be explained with the help of mAyA. Without mAyA, Ishvara is attributesless. Ishvara is pure consciousness. As Nirvikalp samadhi, which is to transcend mAyA and it's three guNa-s, is the final goal, Ishvara is not the final destination for advaitins. It is ishvara's NirguNa aspect, which exists independently without mAyA that is the final goal of an advaitin.

Though Ishvara is eternal, he is to be explained or to be understood in relation to something.

For e.g., one of the attribute is lordship. It is not an absolute term. It is relative. Lordship over what and whom? So we say Ishvara has lordship over the creation, us, human, and everything. Here lies the duality i.e. Ishvara is the Lord of all creatures and the entire creation. When there is no creation, there is no second. Hence there is also no lordship. Similar can be said about other five attributes. Ishvara without attributes is called as attributesless i.e. NirguNa. Hence Ishvara (SaguNa Brahman, सगुण ब्रह्म) as pure consciousness, without any attributes is called as NirguNa brahman (निर्विकल्प समाधि). This is the final destination.

Maya as mithyA is unique to Advaita. Lets understand what is mAyA

mAyA and mithyA (माया, मिथ्या)

Satya (सत्य)= one that is present at all times, everywhere, in past, present and future. It is eternal truth
A-satya (असत्य)= one that is not present at any time (past, present or future) - this is generally translated as unreal or false.

Mithya (मिथ्या)= the one which is not there, but it is experienced. It is also defined as something which is not present at all times. For e.g. waking state is absent in dream state, hence it is not eternal, hence mithyA.

One has to rise above mAyA and go beyond it to realize true nature of Self i.e. Brahman.

Maya is defined as *ma* (not) and *ya* (this), meaning *one which is not there*. If one carefully observes Gita, Naishkarmya Siddhi, Tatva Bodh, Vivek Chudamani and some upanishads, mAyA is defined as the one which is not real and not unreal (false). Hence the word used is mithya by Adi Shankara. mithyA (and so mAyA) is often translated as illusion or appearance or unreal.

I do not find an exact English word for 'Maya'. Many people ask to define mAyA. Maya does not have absolute reality. Maya is not independent, but is dependent upon Brahman. Since mAyA has no independent existence, but a relative existence, hence it has to be defined in relation with something else, be it Brahman, Ishvara (Saguna Brahman) or this world.

 Respect to Brahman, and Nirvikalp Samadhi, mAyA is non-existent.
With Respect to Jagat, i.e. relative reality, mAyA is real

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[... Read More](#)



Understanding Advaita Vedanta

is unreal or false. Hence concept of mithyA is created by Adi Shankara, which helps one to satisfactorily answer doubts of new disciples. Advaitins are taught to withdraw senses and detach, dis-associate with what comes within mAyA i.e. one which is created by mAyA, by being a witness.

There are 4 states of consciousness - waking (जाग्रत), dream (स्वप्न), deep sleep (सुषुप्ति) and the fourth is turiyA (तुरीय), which is beyond three states.

mAyA is only experienced in waking and dream state, but not in deep sleep and turiyA. Hence mAyA is not eternal i.e. it is not present in all states and hence cannot be real. Still since it is experienced in waking and dream state, it is not altogether false, atleast from POV of waking and dream state. Hence it is called as mithyA. From standpoint of supreme reality and from ajAta vAda (अज्ञात वाद) i.e. in brahmi sthiti, nirvikalpa samAdhi, mAyA is non-existent. Only pure consciousness exists. a-jAta (अज्ञात) means a-janma (अजन्म). janma (जन्म) means birth. Hence a-jAta (अज्ञात) means one which is not born. Brahman is unborn supreme reality.

Some are more comfortable with mithyA being translated as 'appearance' rather than 'illusion' It helps them to give more logical meaning to their experience of this world. As one progresses, one has to adopt the meaning of mithyA as 'illusion' as it is necessary to eliminate duality.

Applying mithyA (मिथ्या)

In the beginning of our vedantic sAdhanA, one finds it very difficult to accept this phenomenal world as mithyA (illusion). From meditation POV, mithyAtva of this world helps us a lot. How exactly should one apply mithyA?

mithyA is that which is neither true nor false. That which is not true need not be thought of. That which is false need not be thought of. But mithyA is in-between. So what is the solution? mAyA and this world is experienced in day-2-day life. Adi Sankara says this world is relatively real (vyavahArika satya). This world is of destructive nature it is not real or say truth in the language of vedAnta. Hence the only way to apply mithyA in day-2-day life is to neglect the world. Neglecting is not the same as rejecting or destruction of world. It is to stay indifferent.

vedAnta is for those who after performance of many vedika rites and rituals for many years or lives and by doing pUNya karma have become inwardly pure. vedAnta asks one to renounce the very karma whose fruits gave one inner purity. It is time to move ahead, deep within ourselves, diverting our attention from external world and realize our true nature.

In other words vedAnta asks one to renounce external activities and kAmya karma (action with expectation of fruits). vedAnta asks one to dive deep within. We give much importance to external world, objects and p (i) n and of course to our own body. vedAnta asks one to stop paying attention to all of these and turn our mind inwards. The best way to do is to de-value all that is valued by mind. Accepting this world as

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[... Read More](#)

Understanding Advaita Vedanta

karma does not hinder our spiritual progress.

To sum up, applying mithyA is a process of making extrovert mind introvert. Introvert mind contemplates on Brahman. Brahman establishes introvert mind into heart.

Many people mix between the definitions of anitya and mithyA

nitya and anitya (नित्य-अनित्य)

nitya means SASvat (शाश्वत) meaning eternal, permanent

anitya (अनित्य) means one which is not SASvat (शाश्वत), meaning one which is not eternal or permanent. anitya means of destructive nature. It can also mean temporary existence.

In Tatva Bodh we find Question and answer in the beginning.

Q: What is the difference between nitya and anitya? OR how to discriminate between nitya and anitya?

A: nitya vastu atman is non dual brahman only, anything else is anitya. This is the difference between nitya and anitya.

So what's the difference between anitya and mithyA?

anitya means the one which is destroyed or transformed into something else. e.g. cloth when burned transforms into ash. In this case, the transformation is visible, irreversible and permanent. In other sense, the residue after destruction of an object (cloth) remains.

In illusion, when snake, which was superimposed upon rope gets destroyed due to the throwing of light (Jnana). No trace of snake is left, as technically snake was not actually present. In other words snake was not real, else the traces of snakes should be left after the snake vanishes.

In my opinion, the word 'illusion' better defines mithyA then 'appearance'.

From nitya - anitya viveka i.e. by discrimination between eternal and temporary, one can neglect this world as it is not permanent and subject to constant change. In other words, the worldly objects are not permanent unlike eternal Atman / Brahman and hence wise one should discriminate between nitya vastu Atman and anitya vastu an-atman (not atman), develop dispassion for the an-atman and should withdraw senses from these objects. Withdrawing senses means to neglect or be unconcerned about the presence of objects. This can be done by not giving them importance. This process is called as making the mind

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... Read More

Understanding Advaita Vedanta

freeing it of attachments from this worldly objects and surrendering to Brahman. Surrendering to any form of God is also helpful in the beginning. It is the association of 'I' with this worldly objects that creates bondage, which results into sakAma karma (सकाम कर्म), which results into rAga-dveSa (राग - द्वेष, likes and dislikes), which is responsible for kAma (काम, wish or desire), krodha (क्रोध, anger), lobha (लोभ, greed, covetousness; avarice) and moha (मोह, attachment) thereby making is certain for rebirth and getting trapped in the cycle of birth and death. Shri Nithin Sridhar has explained two karma-s [here](#)

But how can likes and dislikes (राग-द्वेष) give rise to kAma and krodhA (काम-क्रोध)?

It is natural to expect a result of any activity, since lot of effort is put in to accomplish the task.

If you get success in your actions, you will be motivated to repeat the action.

If you get failure in your actions, you will be motivated not to repeat the action and find another solution.

The culprit is the expectation of a desired result from karma (कर्म फल आसक्ति). Which produces likes and dislikes (राग-द्वेष).

But, how to detach oneself from results?

One can detach in various ways. One of them is by dis-associating 'I' with body and karma and hence it's results. Another simpler way is to dedicate the fruit of karma i.e. result of karma to God. Another way is to work with a bhAva that 'I am an instrument of Ishvara'. Advaita way is to dis-associate with discriminative knowledge and by generating dispassion in the worldly activities. Advaita teaches one to be a witness of karma. But detachment does not happen in a day. It takes time and so one has to regularly meditate upon supreme brahman, or on OM and learn to withdraw the senses back from worldly objects like tortoise withdraws it's limbs. Kindly note that only dispassion is not enough for progress. One also needs to MEditate on Brahman via OM. To fly one needs 2 wings - VairAgya (वैराग्य) and abhyAsa (अभ्यास). VairAgya is dispassion and abhyAsa means to study. It also means to do chintan (चिंतन)), manan (मनन) and nidhidhyAsana (निधिध्यासन). It also means to meditate (ध्यान, साधना, जप, etc).

Note: There are many meanings of word 'moha': ignorance, illusion; unconsciousness, swoon; delusion of mind; fascination; infatuation; attachment, love.

Here some like attachment, fascination, infatuation and to some extent love are direct meaning, while rest are implied or resulting meaning.

VairAgya and doSa-darshan (वैराग्य - दोष दर्शन, Dispassion and ⁱfault finding)

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... Read More

Understanding Advaita Vedanta

means any object. Here consumed can be taken as fulfilled. Hence bhogya padArtha (भोग्य पदार्थ) means objects that can be fulfilled.)

Upadesha-s (उपदेश, spiritual instructions) are given on adhikAra bheda (अधिकार भेद). Here, adhikAra (अधिकार) means to qualify. Qualifications is based on purity of mind. There are three types of adhikAri-s (अधिकारी) i.e. three type of students.

1. mUDha adhikAri (मूढ अधिकारी)
2. madhyAma adhikAri (मध्यम अधिकारी)
3. uttama adhikAri (उत्तम अधिकारी)

1. mUDha adhikAri (मूढ अधिकारी)

mUDha adhikAri is the one who does find it difficult to grasp subtle concepts of Advaita but is eager to learn them and has made moksha as the only goal. sAdhaka falling in this category will find it difficult to accept that this world is mithyA. Hence out of compassion, Adi Shankara has also given nitya-anitya vastu viveka (नित्य-अनित्य वस्तु विवेक). As explained, the definition of anitya (अनित्य) does not include the word 'illusion'.

In advaita, vairAgya (वैराग्य, renunciation) i.e. having dispassion in society, is pre-requisite. To have dispassion one needs to decrease the importance of world, it's objects and person.

Earlier it was explained that one needs wings to fly. Only dispassion or only meditation will not help one to progress in spirituality. Both should go hand in hand. Making mind introvert (अन्तर्मुखी) and developing dispassion is done in two ways

1. Doing dosha darshan (दोष दर्शन) in world, it's objects and person (fault finding in worldly objects)
2. Brahma-bhAvanA (ब्रह्म भावना)- Keep mind occupied with thoughts of Brahman

1. Dosha Darshan (दोष दर्शन)

Dosha darshan or fault finding means to compare them with Brahman. The qualities of both are compared.

It is concluded from tarka (तर्क, logical reasoning) that

1. Nothing is permanent
2. This world is nothing but adobe of sorrows
3. This world is ever changing
4. Destruction is the nature of time
5. Everything in this world will be destroyed one day
6. Relations with persons are very subjective and subject to change from time to time and hence not
7. Attachment is the bondage

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[... Read More](#)

Understanding Advaita Vedanta

2. Brahma-bhAvanA (ब्रह्म भावना)

Brahma-bhAvanA (ब्रह्म भावना) means substitute worldly thoughts with thoughts about Brahman. It is called as *sajAtiya vritti pravAha*, *vigAtiya tiraskruti* (सजातीय वृत्ति प्रवाह, विजातीय तिरस्कृति), meaning having thoughts of similar nature and renouncing thoughts of opposite nature. Here thoughts related and describing Brahman (ब्रह्म) are similar and encouraged, while other thoughts of opposite nature i.e. of this world, its objects, day-to-day issues, etc are to be renounced and not given importance. The intention is to keep the mind occupied with thoughts similar to Brahman and thereby not letting worldly thoughts to enter into it. One does not get Jnana (ज्ञान) or realize Brahman from this type of thinking, but it helps block entering of worldly thoughts and hence less time is needed to enter into deep meditation. In other words, time consumed in the beginning of meditation to tune mind and make it introvert is saved. It is also said that by contemplating on Brahman one becomes Brahman (*truNa jantu nyAya*, तृण जन्तु न्याय, which is explained later), but this is not just mental repetition, it is *khoj* (खोज), an inner exploration. Dive deep within to gather pearls of wisdom. This path is called *neti-neti*. It is easier to meditate on OM than to practice *neti-neti*. Even Brahman bhAvanA may be omitted in meditation and one can focus on chanting OM.

Dispassion should be accompanied by power of discrimination (*viveka*). Hence *vairAgya* is *viveka-yukta vairAgya* (विवेक युक्त वैराग्य, dispassion resulting from power of discrimination)

2. madhyama adhikAri (मध्यम अधिकारी)

Arjuna (अर्जुन) is an e.g. of *madhyAma adhikAri*. He would repeatedly argue Bhagavan over same points like is *tyagi* (त्यागी) better or *karma yogi* (कर्म योगी) or is *sanyAsi* (सन्यासी) better or *karma yogi* (कर्मयोगी), etc. He does not wish to fight yet he leaves everything on bhagavan. Finally after questioning bhagavan for 18 *adhAya-s* (18 chapters) he realizes his true nature and becomes neutral without any likes and dislikes.

3. uttam adhikAri (उत्तम अधिकारी)

rAjA Janak (राजा जनक) was *uttam adhikAri*. In *ashtTavakra Gita* (अष्टावक्र गीता), he only asked question once. *Guru AshTavakra muni* (अष्टावक्र मुनि) answered his questions in first chapter. In the second chapter *rAjA Janak* becomes enlightened. He instantly became enlightened as, unlike Arjuna, he listened and digested *Guru's* teachings without any doubt and with full faith. These type of *adhikAri-s* are very rare.

Jiva (जीव)

It can be concluded that the attachment of body and the feeling that 'I' am body is the one that produces bondage. Such a bound soul is called *Jiva-atman* (जीवात्मा) or simply *Jiva* (जीव).

Jiva is defined by *Adi Shankara* in *Tatva Bodh* and other *prakaraNa* granths as the one who associates itself with *karma* and fruits of *karma*, experiences pleasure and pain by associating with mind, body, intellect a ⓘ go. *Jiva* travels from one body to another and is trapped in the cycle of birth and death.

One cannot be a *jiva* alone as according to *shrutis* and *smritis*, the size of *jiva* is given as 100th part of hair

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[... Read More](#)

Understanding Advaita Vedanta

one-ness or Atman and Brahman. Jiva is defined as the one who enjoys / suffers fruits of karma (कर्मफल) and experiences joy, sorrow by associating with mind, experiencing individuality by associating with ego (अहंकार, ahamkAra) and experience pain by associating with physical body. By associating with the attributes or in other words dharma of 5 sheaths (कोश, kosha-s), mind, intellect, and ego it assumes that it is 'I' who is experiencing. Hence in Gita it is advised to do karma with the spirit of detachment. Detachment is to be done with fruits of karma i.e. results of action. Similarly one should detach oneself from all that is not atman. One is free from jiva bhAva (जीवभाव) when one dis-associates itself or 'I' from 5 senses, 5 bodies (कोश, sheaths or kosha-s), mind, intellect and ego. But mind when tries to detach needs something to attach to for it's existence. Hence brahma-bhAva (ब्रह्म भावना) is prescribed. and it is taught that by contemplating on brahman, one becomes one with brahman.

Mind is divided into 2 parts - viveki (विवेकी, discriminative) and a-viveki (अविवेकी, non-discriminative). Hence when it is said to be a witness, one has to be a witness of a-viveki mana (mind). Still one is in duality, even when one contemplates on brahman, one 'IS' contemplating and it has to be done with the help of mind. The real art is to rise above the mind by taking the help of (viveki) mind. Finally one even drops being a witness and what is left is pure consciousness.

According to Adi Sankara, jIva is technically not different from Brahman, the supreme reality.

Here we are not taking into account the Aishvarya of the Lord, meaning jIva trapped in panchamahAbhUta and acquiring qualities like alpaGYa (ignorant of true nature, having little knowledge), alpavyApI (caged in limited space or place) and alpashaktimAna (having limited power), while Brahman endowing itself with mAyA and becoming Ishvara by willingly acquiring or endowing itself the qualities like sarvaGYa (all-knowledgeable), (sarvavyApI) omnipresent and (sarvashaktimAna) all powerful. In free state, beyond mAyA, jIva and Brahman are same as both panchamahAbhUta and mAyA are upAdhi-s. Ishvara is endowed with six upAdhi-s called as six qualities. When in duality, until jIva is trapped in panchamahAbhUta (five bodies made from five elements earth, water, etc), we, as jIva-s are ansha (part) of sarva (whole). If we take 'mind' into account along with jIva, then each jIva is unique with other i.e. each jIva has unique personality and is different from Ishvara. The reality of being eternally free and one with brahman is different from our day-to-day experience, indicating that we need to make 'an effort' to realize truth. While living in dual world, one needs to take refuge in Ishvara and pray to him to raise our consciousness beyond mAyA and merge individuality (feeling of individual identity called sa ego) into totality. Nothing happens without the grace of Ishvara and his mAyA, his spiritual consort, who is our divine compassionate mother.

Why I am not Jiva?

The description of Jiva is given found in Shastras along with it's size. Who is the one who describes Jiva? The observer cannot be the observed.

e.g. If I say that 'this is rose flower', then

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I am the knower of 'Rose Flower'

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... Read More

Understanding Advaita Vedanta

and diving deep within, suddenly the 'I' melts into the source of question 'Who am I' and another 'I-I' spontaneously reveals itself. Even though it is 'I', it is not Ego or Ego associated with Jiva-bhava. IT is a pUrNa-vastu (पूर्ण वस्तु), meaning it is completeness. That is none other than Brahman (ब्रह्म). Only Brahman is the real 'I', the complete 'I' . It is said to be indescribable (अनिर्वचनीय). Hence no one ever has been able to describe it. To describe something, one needs to experience it separately. We do not experience sat or chit or ananda or infiniteness separately. It is our svarupa, our own nature. Rishis made a valiant attempt to describe the indescribable in dual tone for the sake of sAdhaka-s.

Aham 'I' and AhamkAra 'I-ness', 'I am Doer', 'Ego'

The word Aham 'I' is often confused. When we say, Aham, it is just 'I' and not Ego. AhamkAra can be split into two words 'aham' and 'kara', aham means 'I' and kara means 'doer'. Hence the word ahamkAra verily means, 'I am doer'. This difference is not understood by most non-advaitins and hence they wrongly understand the Advaitic interpretation of mahAvAkya-s.

When I say, I am Brahman (aham BrahmAsmi - aham brahma-asmi), then some wrongly take it 'I' as Ego or 'I' as Jiva. For there there is an *a priori* (presumption) that I ma Jiva. Hence they understand that I, the Jiva, becomes Brahman. While Advaita says, I m not Jiva. Hence ask 'Who am I', the answer is 'I' am Brahman. So,

The word 'am' seems to create confusion. It makes us think that the word 'am' indicates 'to become' i.e. it denotes transformation. This would resemble to pariNAMA vAda, in which milk turns into curd. While Advaita does not think in the same way. Advaita adopts vivarta vAda. Hence there is no transformation. Only wrong notion is removed.

I ≠ Jiva

I = Brahman

Advaita begins with dvaita and assumes or say presumes that 'I' is wrongly taken for granted as 'body' or 'Jiva'. Hence Advaita asks us to find this 'I'. Lets substitute 'am' in the above mahAvAkya with 'is'. The mahAvAkya becomes

'I' is Brahman

'I am Brahman' may seem to look like upadeshaka vAkya, but in reality it is a state of Self Realization. Put in other words, One realizes that 'I am Brahman'. For sake of understanding, to explain non-advaitins, we can say 'I is Brahman' as this will remove *a priori* and the wrong understanding of transformation.

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Understanding Advaita Vedanta

Relation between Jiva, Ishvara and Brahman

In simple words,

Brahman + Suddha mAyA = Ishvara

Brahman + avidyA mAyA = jIva

Brahman when associates with his power mAyA becomes Ishvara, who is the creator of Universe, but himself is not deluded by his own mAyA and his creation.

Brahman after creating this world, entered into panch mahAbhUta-s, associated with them and forgot his true nature. Thus he became jIva.

Both Suddha mAyA and avidyA mAyA are called as upAdhi-s. If we remove Suddha mAyA from Ishvara, what remains is Brahman. In the same way, if we remove avidyA mAyA, what remains is Brahman. Ishvara, in other words is Brahman with names and forms. Sri VidyAraNya SvamI in his master piece PanchdaSI says that Brahman created this world form his ansh (part) i.e. only a fragment. Hence mAyA is called as eka deSiya (confined to only one region). Rest all is always Brahman.

Ishvara SrUShTI and jIva SrUShTI (ईश्वर सृष्टि, जीव सृष्टि)

Ishvara has created this world and different padArtha-s (objects, पदार्थ). Creation of Ishvara is called as Ishvara SrUShTI (ईश्वर सृष्टि) i.e. God's creation.

Jiva added his own interpretation, attachment (bhAva, भाव) and gave importance to some objects, i.e. likes some objects or person and dislikes other object or person, or may remain neutral. Sri VidyAraNya SvAmI in his panchdaSI gives few examples to give us more clarity.

Ishvara created Jewel say a diamond. One person likes it's possession i.e. values it and develops liking for it, another one is not happy as he is not able to possess one, third one is prefers to remain neutral. The bhAva of possession is jIva-s creation. It is not Ishvara's creation. Ishvara created a padArtha, while a jIva, who is a bhoktA (भोक्ता), added it's own valuation to a non-living object. In this way, jIva will either try to protect it, acquire it or do not care about it. Hence jIva lives in his own world. The valuation of 'diamond being a pricey possession' and adding a bhAva of acquiring it is the creation of jIva and not Ishvara. This is called as jIva SrUShTI (जीव सृष्टि).

Another example given is that of a women. One lady can be a daughter, sister, wife and mother to different person. What Ishvara created is a human being made up of flesh and bones. It is jIva that added bhAva like daughter, sister, wife, etc to it and associated with it. Women is creation of Ishvara, but the attributes of daughter, sister, wife, etc arise in the buddhi and mind of jIva and hence the relations are called as jIva SrUShTI (जीव सृष्टि).

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[... Read More](#)

Understanding Advaita Vedanta

jIva SrUShtI (जीव सृष्टि) is the cause of bondage. Ishvara SrUShtI does not cause bondage. What mind attaches to and what Intellect gives a meaning and what Ego says 'this is mine' or 'she is my ...' is the cause of bondage. Hence in advaita, we are taught to neutralize likes and dislikes. To do this we need to have viveka (power of discrimination). Advaita requires 4 qualities, which are considered pre-requisites, since vedanta belongs to the 4th ashram. These qualities are explained later. Advaita heavily depends upon these pre-requisites and asks one to develop them.

It is the association of jIva with a sense of belonging, 'I' and 'mine' which creates rAga (राग, liking) and dveSa (द्वेष, rejection) and desire to acquire them or to avoid them. Fulfilling of desires makes us craves more. It is like adding fuel to fire. While failing to acquire what one wants gives rise to krOdha (क्रोध, anger), which further creates negative emotions in us. The chain reaction begins which is the cause of bondage and entering into the never ending vicious cycle of birth and death.

In this process, jIva acquires desires and keeps thinking about them. On the other hand, jIva also tries to avoid that gives discomfort. We create bank balance to be ready to face adverse situation. In other words, we safe guard ourselves and our loved ones so that we do not have to face sorrow.

Hence, we can say that, jIva tries to avoid dukha (दुःख, sorrow, trouble) and searches for everlasting happiness. There is nothing wrong to desire for happiness. Happiness is our real nature. What is wrong is to search outside in objects and persons, while it is inside us. Hence advaita asks us to detach ourselves from external sense objects, cut down relationships as advaita considers it as a poison and asks one to dive deep within to search for peace and bliss. Realizing our true nature will result in freedom from cycle of birth and death.

Advaita asks us to find out the root cause of all the suffering.

What is the root cause of suffering?

Sages and wise men say that the whole activity began since the Brahman got deluded. Brahman got deluded and forgot his own true nature. Forgetting one's true nature was due to avidyA (अविद्या, ignorance). Knowledge is called as 'vidyA (विद्या)'. Knowledge of one's true nature is called as 'vidyA (विद्या)' or 'Jnana (ज्ञान)'. Brahman entered into body and forgot his nature. Brahman became ignorant.

After entering into body and forgetting one's true nature, Brahman, as jIva, searched for it and in this process, tried to associate itself with Sense objects. In this process, jIva got attached to them and the whole unending cycle began. Hence avidyA is called as root cause of bondage.



Since we all are in dvaita (the world of duality) and we experience it in our daily life, hence advaita starts

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moksha (मोक्ष, moxa)

Moksha is generally defined as freedom from the cycle of birth and death. By abiding in SELF (Atman) effortlessly one becomes free from cycle of birth and death. This is called as moksha. After mukti or moksha, the body does not fall and a person returns to this world to experience that all Else i verily Brahman. Such a person is called as Jivan-mukta which roughly means to be free while residing in body.

Vivek Chudamani gives another definition of moksha. refer v268-272 and 273-276

verse 268 says It says, vAsanAtAnava.m tat muktim meaning, renunciation of vAsanA (desires) is liberation.

verse 273 concludes that destruction of desires is nothing but liberation

Vivek Chudamani (224 - 226) says that without atma-jnana i.e. without knowledge of SELF, liberation is impossible.

Three Types of vAsanA-s (वासना, Desires) and their renunciation

Vivek Chudamani says that there there re three types of desires (vAsanA-s)

verses 271, 272 and 273 say:

deha vAsanA (देह वासना) - attachment with body.

loka vAsanA (लोक वासना) - desire follow what others (a-jnani) do

SAStra vAsanA (शास्त्र वासना) - desire to learn more and more SaStra (scriptures)

dehAnuvartana-tyaktvA - Renounce attachment with body. Too much thinking of body is harmful. Giving undue importance to body other than satisfying it's basic needs does more harm than help. To much attachment with body creates hurdle to rise above body consciousness and hence does not allow one to detach.

lokAnuvartana-tyaktvA - Renounce the habit of copy cat behaviour - to follow what others (a-jnanis) do. Generally people tend to run behind worldly objects. Life is full of reactions. We know how to react but do not know how to act. Our mood depends upon behaviour and reaction of others. This behaviour has to be dropped.

SaStrAnuvartana-tyaktvA - Renounce the desire of learning many shastras. - learning shastras is only done for getting clarity and direction. Shastras have their own limitation. They cannot imprat brahma-jr ⓘ . True nature has to be realized.

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Understanding Advaita Vedanta

1. putrecchA: desire to have a child or attachment with children
2. vittecchA: desire to earn money or attachment with money i.. living only for money
3. lokeShNA: expectation from people to give you respect. This third icchA (wish) is very difficult to deal with. One can free oneself from women, children and money by being vairAgi (renunciate), but still everybody likes when someone gives you respect, important and reverse you. This icchA is very difficult to uproot.

A mumukshu, the one who wants mukti (liberation) must renounce all these desires and wishes and only think of brahman.

Is Brahman really deluded?

Earlier we had seen that Brahman got deluded. This would give rise to the obvious question - how is it possible that Brahman can get deluded? In other words, if we ask question - 'Is Brahman deluded?'. The answer is both Yes and No. How? for this we will have to understand three levels of truths.

Three Levels of Truths

Three Levels of truths are - vyavahArika satya, prAtibhAsika satya and pAramArthika satya.

VyavahArika Satya

VyavahAra means day-to-day affairs. VyavahArika satya means that which is true or appears to be true in day-to-day life. In other words, it is practical reality.

PrAtibhAsika Satya

PrAtibhAsa means illusion or appearance. PrAtibhAsika satya is the truth which is only true in the dream state. This truth is within mind. During sleep, mind creates another world. Dream world is true for dreamer, but when one is awake, this world disappears without leaving any trace.

P'ṛamArthika Satya

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Understanding Advaita Vedanta

Explanation for Brahman getting deluded?

Our AcArya Sri Adi Shankara BhagavadpAda says, from pArmArthika standpoint, Brhaman is never deluded. However, from Standpoint of duality, it is explained to us that Brahman got deluded.

There is no contradiction in both explanation. Upon realizing the absolute truth, one realizes that Brahman was always Brahman and was never deluded. Perhaps if Brahman really got deluded, it will break basic tenets of Advaita which says Brahman is the only Truth and is unchanging, immutable, undivided, formless ultimate reality.

As earlier said, since all sAdhaka-s are in duality and see and experience this world, hence our AcArya has said that our shastra-s explain us two levels of truth. Since we experience bondage and have forgotten out true nature, we have to give this explanation. But upon realization, we say that Brahman is never deluded.


It may be confusing. To simplify things, we can say that - Theories of Creation, Brahman getting deluded, Jiva making efforts for Self Realization and attaining moksha, all are true from the standpoint of empirical truth (vyavahArika satya) only. It is not true from absolute reality (pArmArthika satya). Both these levels are structurally supported and so is forgetfulness. Br. Up. II-iii-1 and II-iii-6 explains two levels of truth and Ch. Up 6:15:1-3 explains us forgetfulness, when Guru advises Svetketu, a disciple, - Thou Art that Brahman, Svetketu', not once, not twice, but nine times.

To further understand and gain clarity, let us take a famous example of clouds veiling (covering) Sun.

Lets say that some layers of clouds veil Sun. Hence we can say that, Sun (Brahman) is veiled by ignorance (clouds). After the clouds move on or are removed from our vision, Sun appears again and we can say that Sun (brahman) is found again. But in reality, we know that Sun can never be veiled by Clouds.

Yet we experienced Sun getting veiled. This experience also cannot be false. But is not the reality either. Hence this falls in the category of mithyA. It is true from empirical standpoint only. Suppose if we travel upwards and move beyond clouds, then sun will always shine. Never was the time when Sun never stopped shining.

The experience of Sun getting veiled was only true from one standpoint. Similarly, Brahman getting deluded, theories of creation, etc are valid only from empirical POV, when one is under ignorance. They are not applicable to Self Realized saint, who has already removed ignorance and entered into non-dual state.

The question can arise - How can mithyA ignorance i.e. illusory ignorance can result into real knowledge. The answer is that just like the pouncing dream-tiger results in our waking up, unreal removal of  ignorance can give real knowledge and take us beyond the realms of ignorance.

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Understanding Advaita Vedanta

mithyA. There is another mahA vAkya, sarvam khalu-idam Brahma, meaning 'everything else is Brahman'. So when Jnana comes down from state of Nirvikalpa samadhi, one realizes that everything 'else' is also Brahman. i.e. this world is no different than Brahman. Such a State is called as Jivan Mukti.

Jivanmukti and Videha Mukti

Advaita has a concept of Jivan Mukti. One can be eternally free while living in this body. Such a person is called Jivan Mukta. After the body is permanently dropped, one attains Videha mukti. Deha means body. Vi-deha means without body. Hence Vi-deha mukti means liberation without body i.e. be as pure consciousness without attaching to anything.

To a Jnani, There is no difference in the state of Jivan Mukti and Videha Mukti. The only difference is dropping of body. A Jnani already knows that he is not a body and has permanently dropped association with all 5 bodies.

Advaita says that one can be Liberated here and now, in this physical body. Liberation does not come after one leaves physical body. One one knows what happens after one dies. He does not come back to tell us his experience of Mukti. Only a Jivan Mukta can explain the state which is actually inexpressible.

One does not need to drop his body to become liberated. One only needs to disassociated with body and everything that is non-self. When mind is destroyed, one is eternally liberated.

Whom to Surrender?

When it is said that 'I am Brahman', then a question naturally comes, as to whom should I surrender. We have to surrender to the words of Guru and to the Guru himself. Guru is considered as the living power of *Ishvara Gurur Brahma Gurur Vishnu Gurur devo Maheshvara, Gurur Sakshat ParaBrahma tasmayshri Guruve Namah*. In this way, when utmost importance is given to Guru, who represents Ishvara, there is no separate need to surrender to any form of Ishvara. Technically there is no difference between Guru, Ishvara and Brahman.

Why Theory of Advaita is right

Shruti-s describe Brahman in number of verses. We will see how basic concepts of Advaita comply the description or definition of Brahman as given in Shruti-s



- **Brahman is Unchanging** . Hence Brahman cannot change or transform into something else i.e. *iva*

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Understanding Advaita Vedanta

- **Brahman is the only reality (Satya). Brahman is one without second. Brahman is (SASvata) eternal.** Hence there cannot be any other truth or satya. Truth is the one which exists in all three states at all times and is without beginning and without end. Hence anything other than Brahman cannot be eternal. Hence Jiva, Jagat and mAyA cannot be the truth & eternal, hence they cannot be real. So they have to end or cease to exist in the pure state of nirguNa Brahman. Hence it is said that in Jnana Dristhi or in nirvikalp Samadhi, jiva, jagat and mAyA cease to exist.
- **Brahman is nirAkAra.** Hence it is all pervasive. Any name and form has it's limitations no matter how big it is. A concrete form or a definite shape cannot fill each and every gap and hence cannot fill the entire space.

Acceptance of Six Pramanas

Unlike other non-advaita schools, Advaita accepts all 6 pramANa-s as prescribed by mimAmsA of KumArila Bhatta. The six pramANa-s are

"pratyaksa", "anumana", "upamana", "sabda" "arthapatti" and "anupalabdhi".

Four PramANa-s of NyAya are

Pratyaksha = Direct Perception

AnumAna = Inference --> important pramANa of NyAya

Upamana = knowing what is not known by means of comparison with the known (comparison)

Sabda = Verbal testimony, the pronouncements of the Vedas and the words of great men

arthapatti = presumption or indirect assumption

anupalabdhi = by which we come to know a non-existent object (non-apprehension)

For more details about Pramanas, please read Part 13, [Nyaya](#) of the book Hindu Dharma. First 3 chapters explain us Pramanas. Specifically Chapter [#1](#) and [#3](#) explain six pramanas

Advaita or non-dualism is in agreement with Mimamsa up to a point. It accepts Vedic karma as well as the six pramanas (perceptions or sources of knowledge) defined by Kumarilabhatta. Sankara's non-dualism, Ramanuja's qualified non-dualism, and Madhva's dualism are all Vedantic doctrines and all three are not against Vedic rituals. While non-dualism accepts all the six pramanas of Mimamsa, qualified non-dualism accepts only three- pratyaksa, anumana and the Veda Source: [Vedanta and Mimamsa](#)

Six PramANa-s are explained in [DharmarAja AdhvarIndra's Vedanta ParibhAshA](#)

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Understanding Advaita Vedanta

Mimamsa

The Vedas, as we know, contain "vakyas" and "adhyayas". How are we to know their content, their meaning? What must we do to find out their purpose, their message?

The rules according to which the Vedas are to be interpreted are contained in the Mimamsa sastra. If the Vedas are the law, Mimamsa is the law of interpretation. As I said before, when the government enacts a great number of laws doubts arise as to their intention and application. So to interpret these the government enacts another law. Mimamsa is such a law with reference to the Vedas. It formulates certain methods to discover the meaning of the Vedic texts.

Six methods are mentioned: upakarma-upasamhara, abhyasa, apurvata, phala, atharvada, upapatti. According to Mimamsa the meaning, the intent, of the Vedic Mantras may be understood by applying these methods. Source: [Determining the Meaning of Vedic Texts](#)

Note: *Methods of Interpreting Veda-s are different from PramANas, which Nyaya and VaiSheshika accepts. Nyaya and Vaisheshika are Astika or Thiest philosophies.*

Why Brahman is nirAkAra?

Any name has shape and is are bound by time and space. It can be present only at one places at one time. Any shape cannot be all-pervasive i.e. it cannot occupy any all of the space. e.g. a solid object like stone cannot take the shape of a container. Only formless can take any shape e.g. water takes the shape of container. Air which is formless can penetrate and spread over to entire area. Then Atman is subtler than air and space. Hence it cannot be sAkAra. Even Jiva is considered as formless. Jiva does not have any shape. Jiva is called as shariri i.e. indweller of sharira (body). Jiva is not the body. mAyA is also formless. Hence Brahman can only be nirAkAra.

Without violating the above facts, which are qualities attributed to Brahman, the only theory possible is that of vivarta vAda. The creation has to be explained as as error in perception. Due to false perception, Brahman though undivided, it appears to be divided and appear in multiple forms. Brahman and jiva cannot be separate than Brahman or better said that Brahman in disguise of avidya (ignorance) appears as jiva.

Advaita Vedanta - A Pure Vedantic path



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Understanding Advaita Vedanta

are extension of veda-s and are said to compliment veda-s, but are not veda-s themselves.

Shiddhanta Shaiva have accepted 28 non-vAmachara Shaiva Agama-s and blended them with vedanta along with other independent holy texts like Thirumandiram. Some Shaiva Agama-s like Rudra Yamala Tantra are Tantric in nature. By the word TANtrika, we at once are reminded of black magic, voodoo, sex, etc. This is not true. Though there may be some texts that can be interpreted in a lowly manner like progressing spiritually through sexual union, etc, Tantra-s in general are external rites and rituals, which later on are mixed with internal process and finally one focuses only on internal purification process. What you interpret is according to your own perception and not necessarily what a text say.

Kashmir Shaivism, a beautiful philosophy, is said to blend all Shaiva Mata into one. It ends in non-dual experience, which is called as para-Bhairava state.

Veda-s have imposed certain restrictions on who can read them and who cannot. Advaita too has pre-requisites and certain restriction as it is a part of veda-s. Tantra-s are said to remove these restrictions so that all can practice. They are step by step instructions depending upon the level of consciousness and purity of a sAdhaka (meditator). Kashmir Shaivism believes that Women can achieve para-bhairava state more quickly and easily then men. Kashmir Shaiva, as taught by Swami Laxmanjoo is open to all irrespective of caste and gender.


Advaita on the other hand is purely based in vedanta. It belongs to the fourth Ashrama - sanyAsa Ashram. For the other three Ashrama-s there are samhitA and BrAhmaNa portion of veda-s. For vAnaprastha there is AraNyaka, which is first step to make our mind introvert. Hence Upanishads (vedanta) are a part of veda-s. Advaita does not reject veda-s, but considers it as an important step for inner purification.

Unlike other mata-s advaita does not depend upon any non-vedic texts. Those who practice purely vedic patha (path), they do not need to practice or follow any Agama-s says SUTa samhitA of Skanda PUrANa. Hence Advaita is said to be pUrNa vedic dharma or pUrNa vedic sampradAya. Hence Advaita is purely vedantic mata.

Uniqueness of Advaita

Common thing about all vedantic schools is that there is one supreme reality. In this sense the term non-dual is applicable to all schools of vedanta.

Other non-dual thiest schools of Vedanta say that

1. (Their form of) Ishwara is supreme, independent and real
2. mAyA is God's eternal power and is real
3.  yA is dependent upon Ishwara and is eternal.
3. jiva is the creation of Ishwara through mAyA.

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2. Prakruti is eternal.
3. Jiva is eternal
4. This world and hence jiva is real and a part of prakruti

In all these claims / theories / assumptions / beliefs, it can be noted that

1. There is more than one thing that is Real and Eternal - both jiva and mAyA
2. The supreme reality, Ishwara in this case, who is real and indivisible, divides itself through Yog-mAyA or simply mAyA and that division is real.

Now lets see advaita concepts

1. Brahman is real, indivisible and unchanging
2. mAyA is unreal from POV of supreme reality and is dependent upon Brahman.
3. jiva is unreal and dependent upon Brahman
4. according to atheist school, prakruti is independent.

The uniqueness about advaita is except Brahman, everything else is not real, eternal and independent. In this sense, advaita and truly the only school which supports the truth proclaimed by vedas i.e. 'Truth is one'.

Excellent explanation of read [Significance of the name Advaita](#) is given by Sri Swami Chandrashekhar Bharati, late ShankarAcharya of Sringeri Sharada Peetha.

There are different vAda which different philosophical schools have adopted to support their theory of 'creation of world'

vAda-s - Theories of Creation

There are 4 different vAda-s - Arambha vAda, pariNAMA vAda, vivartha vAda and ajAta vAda.

Arambha vAda

God is the kartA and he created this universe. Like potter creating pot. Nyaya-vaisheshika adopt this vAda. This vAda is for the ones who believe in karma and cannot believe that God does not do any karma. They believe that without karma nothing is possible.



pariNAMA vAda

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sAnkhyas Adopt this vAda. They say that Sun which does not do any work but under its influence we find transformations like water vapourizing into steam, plants growing, etc.

It is for subtle intellect. VisisTadvaita and dvaita adopted this vAda.

Vivarta vAda

This vAda is adopted by Adi Shankara to explain the concept of mAyA as mithyA.

e.g. snake-rope. Snake does not exist but is superimposed on rope. Without rope there is no snake. As one sees rope, snake vanishes without any trace. If it was real, the transformation would have left traces e.g. cloth burned in fire reduces to ash, which is permanent, real and inconvertible back into cloth.

As the mind is purified, one is taken a step further, more closer to reality. sAdhaka keeps moksha as the only goal in life and meditates on supreme brahman, thereby uprooting all other desires except one - I want moksha.

ajAta vAda

Non-existence of mAyA and so this world. Only Sat-Chit-Ananda Atman exists - Pure Non-duality experience.

This path is for the ones who are eligible for Self Realization i.e. they have all desires uprooted except the one - I want moksha. Now this desire also has to be dropped. AshTavakra Gita talks about this vAda. If bandhan (bondage) is brahti (illusion), then moksha is mahA-brAnti (great illusion).

To make him quit this last desire questions are asked to sAdhaka:

1. Who wants moksha?
2. Who is the one who meditates?
3. Who am I?

If I am Sat-Chit-Ananda then I do not need to sit in meditation and then establish myself in samadhi. Now the effort drops and one becomes free from last desire of moksha. sAdhaka enters into samadhi without making any effort spontaneously (sahaj). That is why it is said that Jnana cannot be obtained by karma, without Jnana there is no mukti (liberation), liberation is here and now (as there is no time lag after one realizes - Who Am I - after the enquiry, one enters into non-dual state and seeking ends here and now - immediately and not after some seconds, minutes or years).

One can become detached with this world and withdraw senses and become an observer, but not enter into samadhi, as one is still observing. Hence it is said to drop the process of observation,

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Understanding Advaita Vedanta

mahAvAkya-s

Mahavakyas describe Advaita sthiti i.e. jiva-brahma aikya meaning jiva (Atman) and brahman are one. There are many mahAvAkya-s. There are 1180 shAkha-s of vedas. Each shAkha-s have their own upanishads. Hence technically there are 1180 upanishads. Out of 1180, only 220 are said to be extant. Out of 220, 108 are supposed are mentioned in MuktikA upanishad. Out these 4 upanishads belonging to 4 different veda-s are selected i.e. one upanishad from one veda is selected. From these upanishads, 1 sloka or half sloka is selected as mahAvAkya, which describes jiva-brahma-aikya.

Four Mahavakyas are:

1. प्रज्ञानम् ब्रह्म

Prajñānam brahma

Consciousness is Brahman - Rig Veda, Aitreya Upanishad 3.3

2. अहं ब्रह्मास्मि

Aham brahmāsmi

I am Brahman - Yajur Veda, bruhadAraNyaka (Brihad-araNyaka) Upanishad - 1.4.10

3. तत्त्वमसि

Tattvamasi - Tat Tvam Asi

That thou art - meaning That (Brahman) is you) - Sama Veda, Chandogya Upanishad - 6.8.7

4. अयमात्मा ब्रह्म

Ayamātmā brahma

This Atman is Brahman - Atharva Veda, Mandukya Upanishad 2)

- *Tat Tvam Asi* is a upadeshaka Mahavakya - You are That (Brahman)
- One meditates with ananya bhava (a+anya = not -different) '*AyamAtmA Brahma*' (Atman is Brahman)
- During meditation, one realizes, *pragyAnama Brahman* i.e. consciousness is Brahman (consciousness is everything, awareness is the key, as it helps one separate oneself 'I' from which is not Self)
- Finally one realizes that *aham BrahmAsmi*, I am Brahman
- After Steadying oneself in this state 'I am Brahman', one sees that '*Sarvam Khalu-idam Brahman*' i.e. everything else is also Brahman, which means that which world is not different from Brahman



After understanding 'What is Advaita' lets see who can live the life according to Advaita.

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Understanding Advaita Vedanta

Bhagavan in Gita says that

क्लेशोऽधिकतरस्तेषामव्यक्तासक्तचेतसाम्।
अव्यक्ता हि गतिर्दुःखं देहवद्भिरवाप्यते॥12.5॥

12.5 Greater is their trouble whose minds are set on the unmanifested; for the goal; the unmanifested, is very hard for the embodied to reach.

The path is difficult because the aspirant has to give up attachment to the body from the very beginning of his spiritual practice. The embodied: Those who identify themselves with their bodies. Identification with the body is Dehabhimana. The imperishable Brahman is very hard to reach for those who are attached to their bodies. Further, it is extremely difficult to fix the restless mind on the formless and attributeless Brahman.

Sri Ramana Maharshi in Sri Ramana Gita Chapter 7 says:

Ones who have purified their mind through sadhana (meditation) or by Sattvik Karma in past lives can practice advaita Vedanta. He further says that one who does not give much importance to his body and senses and has no interest in the worldly affairs instead of being surrounded by worldly issues are considered as eligible for Self Enquiry.

Svetasvatara Upanishad says that same thing (6.23) -

यस्य देवे परा भक्तिः यथा देवे तथा गुरौ ।
तस्यैते कथिता ह्यर्थाः प्रकाशन्ते महात्मनः ॥
प्रकाशन्ते महात्मन इति 16:23।

यस्य For whom देवे to God परा भक्तिः Supreme devotion यथा देवे as to God तथा So गुरौ To the Master ।
तस्यैते To that [high souled / pure mind] one कथिता expounded ह्यर्थाः these truths प्रकाशन्ते shine महात्मनः to that high souled॥ प्रकाशन्ते महात्मन इति shine as High Soul indeed.

These truths, when taught, shine forth only in that high-souled one / pure mind who has Supreme Devotion to God, and an equal degree of devotion the Spiritual Master. They shine forth in that High-Souled one only.

Bhagavan in Gita says

मनुष्याणां सहस्रेषु कश्चिद्यतति सिद्धये।
यततामपि सिद्धानां कश्चिन्मां वेत्ति तत्त्वतः॥7.3॥

manuṣyaṇāṁ sahasrēṣu kaścidyatati sidhdayē.
ya i āmapi sidhdānāṁ kaścinmān vētti tattvataḥ..7.3..

7.3 Among thousands of men one perhaps strives for perfection; even among these successful striving

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Understanding Advaita Vedanta

संन्यासस्तु महाबाहो दुःखमाप्नुमयोगतः।
योगयुक्तो मुनिर्ब्रह्म नचिरेणाधिगच्छति॥5.6॥

saṁnyāsastu mahābāhō duḥkhamāptumayōgataḥ.
yōgayuktō munirbrahma nacirēṇādhigacchati..5.6..

5.6 But, O mighty-armed one, renunciation is hard to attain without (Karma-) yoga. The meditative man equipped with yoga attains Brahman without delay.

Uddhava Gita says the same (6.22)

यद्यनीशो धारयितुं नमो ब्रह्मणि निश्चलम् ।
मयि सर्वाणि कर्मणि निरपेक्षः समाचर ॥ २२ ॥

6.22 If thou art unable to hold the mind steady on the Brahman, then perform all actions without caring for the results, giving them up unto me.

Verses 1 to 22 of Chapter 6 talk about Jnana. Next verses are for bhakti.

According to Shastras, Brahma Vidya cannot be given to the one who is not a pure mind or does not have subtle intellect. Hence Bhagavan has given us two paths. They are described by Shri Nithin Sridhar [here](#)

Who can teach Brahma-Vidya?

Brahman or (Sat-Chit-Ananda) Atman can alone impart knowledge about itself. This can be found in Katha Upanishad, which is a discourse between Nachiketas and Yamadev, who thoroughly tests Nachiketas before imparting Brahma-Vidya. Some verses are quoted below, more can be found [here](#).

Blind Leading Blind

2.5 The deluded staying in illusion thinking themselves to be enlightened go in circles faltering and floundering like sightless-men led by a sightless one.

Brahma Jnana is difficult to grasp and teach

2.7 It is not possible for many to hear about it (Brahman) and even having heard many do not understand. The teacher must be a skilful one and the pupil should be sharp in grasp. The knower is a wonderful person instructed by the adept.

(i)

Brahman is beyond speech and arguments i.e. mind and intellect

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Understanding Advaita Vedanta

when instructed by another. O! Dearest one! O! Nachiketa! let there be seekers like you! You are truly resolved in your desire.

Advaitins never compare capacity of Jnani with avatAra

Advaita does not say 'I Am God' in the sense that - I am Lord Krishna, Lord Rama, Lord Shiva and I can do whatever they can do and can reproduce their supernatural powers and abilities. This is the wrong notion that many people think. Advaita talks about NirGuna Brahman which does not do anything and is at peace. To better understand, we can use word, 'consciousness or awareness. i.e. Consciousness Am I, Awareness Am I. Also note that this 'I' is not Ego or representing Body (sarira bhAva / deha bhAva). It is pure consciousness. But a person who does not consider himself as nirakAra find it difficult to consider Brahman / God as nirAkAra. For them whose consciousness is strongly clinged to body, sAkAra upAsanA is always a better option. After mind is purified, and God gives them experience of detachment and orders them to learn Advaita, one can shift to Advaita. If the prakruti is emotional, then better continue sAkAra upasanA, as emotional characters can progress faster in sAkAra upAsanA then in nirAkAra upAsanA no matter how much intelligent they are, a person lives by mind and not by intellect. Even highly intelligent people have problems with co-workers and even their life partners. They divorce their wives. They are not free from bias and have attachment with someone or something. 'Intelligent' from spiritual POV means subtle intellect that understands and grasps non-dual concepts or ultimate truth. It is not concerned with by-hearting and photographic memory, though they can be an asset for the one who is destined to be an AchArya. Pure mind is better word to avoid this confusion.

If you compare the capacity of any avatAra, then is is not worth comparing. But from POV of tatva Jnana, both are same. An avatAra can give moksha to many more people as compared to a Jnani.

Sri Ramakrishna says a Jnani is like a wooden log upon which 2-3 people can hold on to an cross ocean of samsAra, but an avatAra is like a big raft upon which many many people can sit and cross ocean of samsAra.

Advaita asks one to rise above dvaita

Katho Upanishad (I.3.14) says

*UtthishThatha, jAgrata, prApya varAn nibodhata
Kshurasya dhArA nishitA duratyata
durgam pathastat kavayo vadanti.*

Arise, awake, receive guidance from the best preceptors
For the path is like a razor's edge
- dark, beset with obstacles, difficult to tread,
sṛ (i) ɔ experienced (who have travelled the path), say.

--

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Advaita. For the ones whose time has come to practice advaita i.e. mind is purified, are asked to rise above dvaita. This is done by doing khandan (negation) of dvaita. For the ones whose mind is still impure, and Guru thinks he will not be able to absorb tatva Jnana, mental purification is advised. This includes karma kanda for those who have zeal and spirit of doing work and bhakti yoga for stabilizing mind and developing faith (bhava) in God. So advaita does not reject Dvaita, but considers it an important step for mental purification. To encourage a disciple or devotee in any one of the marg - karma or bhakti, their glories are sung, so that mind accepts it easily and devotee practices it wholeheartedly.

Khandan is done from a positive standpoint, so that sadhaka can rise above dvaita. There is no hatred. This is the reason why one should qualify for receiving Jnana, else it is disaster waiting to happen.

More more details, please visit: [Journey of Advaita Vedantin](#)

sAdhana CatuShTa varNana (four qualities to practice advaita)

Vivek Chudamani (choodamani) says that four sadhans (qualities) are necessary / required for one to progress in advaita. (sAdhana chatusta varNana).

1. Vivek - discrimination between Real and Unreal. i.e. only Atman, Brahman is real, everything else is unreal
2. Vairagya - dispassion in society (worldly matters)
3. Shatsampatti (6 values)
 - a. Sham – Control over mind
 - b. Dam – Control over 5 senses
 - c. Uprati – Saturation point (control over mins and saturation brings the saturation of slinging or attachment in any worldly attachment)
 - d. Titiskha – To stay neutral in favourable and unfavourable circumstances
 - e. Shraddha – Faith in Yourself (I am doing nothing wrong in practicing this path), Guru, God and Shastras.
 - f. Samadhan – To stay focused on the practice (one-pointedness like that of tiger).

4. mukshatva – Burning desire for liberation.

One must have Vivek and Vairagya along with firm determination for liberation. All other qualities gradually...

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Understanding Advaita Vedanta

For More details, please visit [What is Advaita Vedanta? Can it be applied in today's Practical Life?](#) (External Link to Indiaspirituality Blog)

You can also visit [Advaita FAQs](#) (External Link) and [Advaita - Kamkoti Mandali](#) (External Link)

Snake- Rope Analogy - A perfect example to explain Advaita

Suppose you enter into a dark room and suddenly see a snake, your natural or spontaneous reaction will be to either run away or to grab it for food or for earning. So there are 2 things -

1. To run away or
2. To run towards

snake.

You switch on the light and immediately (without any delay), you see that it is just a Rope. Now the the 'running' is over. There is peace. This means mind has 2 dimensions. To give or take, to accept or select and to reject. Advaita teaches to go beyond mind into the third dimension of stillness. To go beyond duality.

Snake was super imposed upon Rope by false perception. It was an illusion.

Snake seemed truth but was never a truth.

Snake did not last for ever. It was not permanent.

Snake vanished without any trace and without any delay.

Snake did not exist beyond rope.

Snake cannot exist with rope.

Snake is dependent upon rope for it's existence

Snake cannot exist without rope. So Rope is it's AdhAra (support), the substratum, base upon which snake rested.

Rope can exist without snake.


Now, replace '*Snake*' by '*Maya*' and '*Rope*' by '*Brahman*' in above para.

Maya was super imposed upon Brahman by false perception. It was an illusion.

Maya seemed truth but was never a truth.

Maya did not last for ever. It was not permanent.

Maya vanished without any trace and without any delay.

M  did not exist beyond Brahman.

Maya cannot exist with Brahman.

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Understanding Advaita Vedanta

Snake was where ever there was rope, but not beyond it.
 Snake was inside rope and rope was inside snake
 Snake was inside rope, but rope was not inside snake
 Rope was never inside snake and snake was not inside rope.
 Snake rested on Rope. Rope is the substratum upon which snake rested.
 Snake never existed.

Snake was inside rope and rope was inside snake -->

Rope was never inside snake and snake was not inside rope. --> In reality, rope never existed. From the standpoint of reality i.e. after realizing true nature of Self, one can say that, Snake is not inside rope and rope is not inside snake.

Snake never existed --> ajaata or ajaati vAda, meaning mAyA never existed (in reality). This statement is being said from Atma-Sthiti (state of Jnana) and not from Practical Standpoint.

Now reflect on the following slokas (verses) from Bhagavad Gita

मया ततमिदं सर्वं जगदव्यक्तमूर्तिना।
 मत्स्थानि सर्वभूतानि न चाहं तेष्ववस्थितः॥१९.४॥

mayā tatamidaṁ sarvaṁ jagadavyaktamūrtinā.
 matsthāni sarvabhūtāni na cāhaṁ tēṣvavasthitaḥ..१९.४..

9.4 All this world is pervaded by Me in My unmanifest aspect (nirgina Brahman); all beings exist in Me, but I do not dwell in them.

--> Snake was where ever there was rope, but not beyond it.
 --> Snake was inside rope, but rope was not inside snake

न च मत्स्थानि भूतानि पश्य मे योगमैश्वरम्।
 भूतभृन्न च भूतस्थो ममात्मा भूतभावनः॥१९.५॥

na ca matsthāni bhūtāni paśya mē yōgamaiśvaram.
 bhūtabhṛnna ca bhūtasthō mamātmā bhūtabhāvanaḥ..१९.५..

9.5 Nor do beings exist in Me (in reality); behold My divine Yoga, supporting all beings, but not dwelling in them, is My Self, the efficient cause of beings.

--(i)-- .rope was never inside snake and snake was not inside rope.

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Understanding Advaita Vedanta

9.6 As the mighty wind, moving everywhere, rests always in the ether, even so, know thou that all beings rest in Me.

--> Snake rested on Rope. Rope is the substratum upon which snake rested.

TruNa-Jantu NyAya and Keet-Bramar NyAya

1. Truna-Jantu Nyaya (Caterpillar law)

Caterpillar is some 16 legs. So when it wants to move from one branch to another, it will branch fetch hold of another branch and grab it with it's front legs and only after fetching it, it leave older branch so shift to new branch.

This can be interpreted like, at the time of death, predominant desires decide our future birth and only when the decision is made new body is given to soul.

2. Keet-Bramar Nyaya

keet is an insect which bhamari catches and cages inside mud with holes to breath and feed and to bite. After being trapped, that insect (sorry I do not know english name) constantly thinks of bhamri that it will come and bite it. Finally it becomes bhamri.

So by thinking of brahman, one becomes brahman.

Subtle Points

Whether you accept it or not, you are under the influence of maya.

So you will have to do a Atma Khai ...

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The Statement - I AM That, will only become true if I = THAT

I represents individuality. Ego keeps which I alive and wants to sustain individuality.

I can be = ego, mind, body, sukshma sharita, jiva.

In, I AM That, **AM** is the one that holds the key. It shows the process and also makes the statement as Non-Dual.

If you replace 'AM' by 'AM NOT' then the whole meaning changes.

So I = THAT only when you know the Real 'I' or your true nature. But you are in duality. Just assuming does not help. So you have to ask 'Who AM I'. It is a khoj and after asking the questioning, i.e. Nidhidhyasana, Thoughts and doubts ceases, they dissolve into source. You have to find the source of thoughts, breath, or mantra. That happens by awareness. By being Aware you are separated from Thoughts, not be being involving in thoughts. You will have to be de-focused by being aware. Anyways, that's all technical. But just a repetition 'Who Am I' will not help.

Keet-Bramar Nyaya says that you will have to do chintan and manan (thinking and contemplation) and not repetition. It is basically Antar-Khoj (diving deep within).

Imagine a vast endless milky ocean (divine ocean of energy). Entire Ocean is Maya.

Brahman is upon which this Maya rests and is insuperable.

The difference between Jiva and Ishwara is that while Ishwara can take any form anywhere at will and can also again merge into Brahman at will, Jiva is bound and influenced by Maya.

Both Ishwara and Jiva have 'UpAdhis'. Ishwara takes AdhAra of 'Vidha Maya', the entire cosmos and is always aware of it's true nature i.e. Brahman. Remember that one rises above Maya by being aware or by knowing 'who am I' i.e. Being Brahman. Ishwara is always aware that he is 'Brahman'. That is why he is called Maya-Pati, swami or controller of Maya. He also knows that Maya is the shakti of Brahman and cannot be separated from it like fire and it's warmth.

Bhagavan in Gita gives Jnana to Arjun. Since Gita is essence of Upanishads, which talks of Brahma-Jnana, so Bhagavan Krushna also gives Brahma-Jnana to Arjun. Only a realized soul can give Brahma-Jnani. Only Jnani can give Jnana-Updesha. So Bhagavan is also SELF Realized. If you have noticed, in Gita it's Just Bhagavan, making it universal. Instead of Being Bhagavan, the substratum of entire universe, he does not take credit. He humbly says I am taking everything from Upanishads, which are created by Rishis, or simply I am quoting from Shastras, even though everything originates or emerges and dies (udbhava and laya) in God. So even bhagavan Krushna considers Shastras as authentic and there is not even a trace of Ego (i) no 'I' in Bhagavan. Also note that Gita does not teach from Only one standpoint.

Coming back. Ishwara takes Adhara of Vidha Maya and Jiva takes Adhara of Panch-Mahabhuta. Ishwara is

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Understanding Advaita Vedanta

Again, consider an ocean (inverted on top and from which two branches come out – just for visualization, Jiva and God)

So the thing that separates Ishwara and Jiva is knowledge that 'I Am Brahman'. If you remove Vidha Maya from Ishwara and you remove Panch-Mahabhuta from Jiva, what is left is pure Brahman. That is why when in Jnana, one says, 'I am Brahman'. This does not mean that he can do same miracles that Krushna or other gods do, having siddhis (supernatural powers) entirely depends upon Grace of God and devas (demi-Gods).

Ishwara does not depend upon anything 'Else' for creation of universe

It is said that this world or universe was created from the mind of Lord Brahman by his kalpanA (thought or imagination)

To make anything who will require 2 things – Material needed for creation and knowledge (to make or create that particular thing).

Ishwara knows what to make (knowledge) and also has tools and materials to make things (Maya). Ishwara does not need anything outside him.


I recall an example of spider.

Spider knows how to make 'Jala' (Web) and also has tools (saliva) to make it. Spider does not need anything extra from outside to create web i.e. Nor knowledge or material. Similarly, Ishwara is both material cause and efficient cause.

Three Paths

Sri Ramana Maharshi says there are 3 margas

Sri Ramana Maharshi, in Sri Ramana Gita says, SELF can be realized by 3 paths

1. MaargaNa: Vichar Marg, Self Enquiry, Jnana Marg
2. Majjan: To dive within (dictionary meaning). i.e. To merge, dissolve yourself in the source of Mantra. Bhakti Marg
3.  JaNa Rodh: To stop breath (dictionary meaning). To observe, control and slow down the breath. i.e. Breath Control. Yog (Raja Yog)

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samadhi, mind is emptied and destroyed. Now the mind does not rise again. There is no need to mediate. A person stays in nirvikalp samadhi for 21 days. After that the contact with body is permanently dropped. Sri Ramakrishna says only avatar can come back again into body after 21 days. Most people do not return, but a select few, chosen by God, return from samadhi to do work of God. After that it's all God, not that person. He is Jivan Mukta. Such persons are very rare. My prostrations to Jivan Muktas who are Jnani Bhaktas, Atman of Krishna itself.

In Jnana marg, from beginning, you do not think of anything else than Brahman. That is why Shankaracharya has called Maya as 'Mithya'

It is illusion. Mithya means that one that does not exist but still you feel it.

Remember Snake and Rope analogy. Upon seeing snake, you either tried to run away or towards it. So till you are in Maya give-n-take continues. Only after you realize Brahman, you can say (in Atma Sthiti) that 'I am Brahman' and that Maya is illusion. It is a statement said from the state of SELF Realization.

Practically all sadhakas, one does feel separateness. The approach is different in all paths. In Dvaita after you have divine vision of God, all your wishes are up-rooted as you have reached your destination. You are entirely surrendered to God, though you have separate existence. It will depend upon God to give you what is best for you. As Bhagavan in Gita says, at the time of death, if you take his name (Krishna or meditate on Brahman), then there is no second birth.

ajAta vAda: Moksha - a mahabranti (great illusion)

a-jaata
not-born

ajAta means 'not born'

Advaita accepts maayaa, but ajaata vaada says that there is nothing like maya. It rejects maya. ajaata vaada talks from the graveyard of karma and duality.

CAUTION: This is only for very advanced sadhakas.

When God has up-rooted all the desires except one - I want Moksha, even this desire - I want Moksha, produces mental agitation. It is time to even renounce this desire. This is where ajAta vAd comes into play, not before. Now the questions are bombarded which will completely shatter anything that is holding in the way. Questions like, who is the meditator?. IF bandha (bondage) is brAnti (illusion), then moksha (liberation) is mahAbrAntI (great illusion).



I will not elaborate much, as it may do more harm than help if wrongly understood. All I can say is that

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Vachyarthā and Lakṣyarthā

Every statement has Vaachyarthā (apparent / literal meaning) and lakṣhyarthā (destination)

I will give an e.g. given by Swami Sukhbodhananda in one of his discourses:

He (Swamiji) pointed to Krishna idol and said 'This is Krishna'.

Now, the pointed finger is vaachyarthā, which one has to drop. It is used for just giving in the direction. Pointed finger is not the destination. The destination (lakṣhya) is the idol of Krishna. If you keep looking at pointed finger, can you look at Krishna? no. If you look at shadow, can you look at Sun? No.

Finger has to be dropped. It was never the destination. But since we were not able to find Krishna or to make it easier to find Krishna, the finger is pointed. After one moves attention to Krishna, the finger is dropped. No more attention is given to finger, which is just a pointer and not destination. Krishna is the only center of focus or attention. It is the only thing that one should care.

From this Swamiji's e.g., I can extend that:

Finger is māyā and idol of Krishna is Brahman.

Shastras teach us in a language which looks like dual. This is because, a sadhaka is always living in duality. So it is easy to talk from POV (Point Of View) of sadhaka.

Another e.g. Will take things more clear:

Imagine that you are going from place A to place B. In between there is a river and you do not know to swim. So you take ādhara (support) of boat. Boat has advantage that it will not sink itself and you. But after reaching boat, do you keep sitting in boat or move ahead? definitely move ahead.

Here, boat is māyā, it is a tool and not a destination.

Earlier we had concluded that Advaita does not give importance to māyā.

But we have heard so much about māyā (maayaa). Why is māyā talked too much?

Since matured sadhakas are very rare and are generally in isolation and maun cannot be taught. You will have to feel it, it is not much focused. Teaching via maun is very supreme, as in the case of Bhagavan DaśhaNaamurty, but very few can grasp it. It also requires presence of a Realized Guru. Most of the sadhakas are beginners and for them māyā is taught. It's the newer ones that makes noise and so we

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Understanding Advaita Vedanta

brahman, source of everything – breath, mantra, thoughts and this world). No more bombarding or withdrawing of senses et al is done.

Subtle points for sincere advaita meditators.

If you keep looking at thoughts, you can say that you are detached from them, but still you keep seeing them. The point is not of keeping looking at thoughts and images, but to move beyond into their source. If you are chanting OM, then you will have to neglect thoughts AND shift your attention to OM and then move to its source to be one with Brahman.

Mature sadhaka has no interest in this world and can neglect the influence of maya (I do not say he is above maya), worldly thoughts do not enter into his mind. In such a case, isolation is highly recommended. Now the paatra (vessel) is free from hole and there is no further dumping of thoughts of day-2-day life. Such a matured sadhaka will only go to source of mantra OM, and enter into samadhi. Now, since there is no more dumping in mind, past thoughts, vasanas and even vasanas from past life / lives may come out during meditation and are up-rooted. Remember, thoughts are not coming, they are going. So let them go. Do not stop them from going :)

One has to change the direction of sight, turn opposite 180 degrees and you will see the sun.

So a person after neglecting maya is not a Jnani. He becomes a Jnani when he merges into Brahman / source. Mind melts into source heart, / Atman / Brahman by a-anya bhava (ananya bhava) bhakti. i.e. Not different i.e. I am not different from Brahman.

If you keep looking at thoughts even for hours, you can say that you are detached, but actually nothing happens, progress stops. Infact one can develop a habit of observing thoughts and waiting for next to come. It is not good. One has to move beyond thoughts, mind and so maya. Not by observing thoughts or considering this world as illusion, but by moving on to the source of thoughts or mantra (OM), one can be in non-dual state. One has to dive deep within to gather the pearls of wisdom.

Adi Shankara in Vivekchudamani has sung many verses on Brahmatatvamasi bhavayaatmani meaning, have brahman bhaavanaa i.e. (Constantly think of brahman. (10 Slokas sloka no 254 - 263 talk about contemplating on brahman and not maayaa) - keet-brahar nyaaya

*Jaati neeti kula gotra dooragam
naama roopa guna dosha varjitam!
Desha kaala vishayaativarti yad
Brahma tatwamasi bhaavayaatmani!! (254)*

(i)

254. That which is beyond caste and creed, family and lineage; devoid of name and form, merit and

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Understanding Advaita Vedanta

The gist is

1. extrovert mind → introvert mind → development of vairagya with the help of maayaa
2. introvert mind to contemplate on brahman with a-anya bhakti (a = not, anya = different) BG 12:6 (for sAKAr upAsanA, refer 8:14 - ananyachetA us translated as single-pointed devotion. It can also be interpreted as continuously thinking - 'I am brahman')
3. Mano laya. No need to think on maayaa. Establish oneself on Atman sthiti (Brahma sthiti) and try to remain in it. Nirvikalp samadhi
4. Mano naasha → ajaata vaada → Destruction of mind. Sahaj samadhi.
5. Jivan mukta → after meditation is over, no dvaita darshan. Jagat is Brahman itself (sarvam khalu-idam brahman)

But why is maayaa first talked about and then at other place it's existence is negated i.e. From viverta-vaada to ajaata vaad? This is the style of traditional teaching.

Upadeshas are given from AdhikAra bheda

Another way of traditional teaching is to accept the existence and later on negate it. This can be seen in Vivek Chudamani and in Gita.

Initially, one has practical approach and sees even Jnani is suffering for body pains. So to explain it (to un-ripe, beginners), Shankaracharya says that Prarabhdha is the reason. He goes on explaining logically that:

Suppose you are hunting a lion, and shoot an arrow. After releasing arrow, if such an opinion arises in buddhi that it is gau (cow) and not Lion, then nothing can be done. Arrow has already left the bow. similarly, Prarabhdha is like this arrow already on travel and will hit the target with fullforce (V.C. 452).

Later on it is said that: In the One Reality, the concept of the universe is a mere fancy. How can there be any diversity in the Changeless, the Formless, the Absolute? (400)

For more Refer Vivek Chudamani (Choodamani) verses 441 – 464 and verses 398-406

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3.5 Because, no one ever remains even for a moment without doing work. For all are made to work under compulsion by the gunas born of Nature.

यथैथांसि समिद्धोऽग्निर्भस्मसात्कुरुतेऽर्जुन।
ज्ञानाग्निः सर्वकर्माणि भस्मसात्कुरुते तथा॥4.37॥

4.37 Just as burning fire turns fuel to ashes, O Arjuna, so does the fire of knowledge turn all Karma to ashes.

To a matured sadhaka, shastras say that all karmas are destroyed. All means prArabhdha, AgAmi and sanchit. So even prArabhdha is destroyed. Gita also says that one cannot be free from any karma and so one should practice nitya karmas.

Upadeshas are said from adhikAra bheda.

Refer BG 4:36 - 4:38, which sings the glories of Jnana.

This unique method is called adhyAropa apavAda. It was rediscovered by Revered Swami Sacchidanandendra Saraswati.

adhyAropa apavAda - Only Consistent Traditional Teaching of Adi Shankara BhagavadpAda

adhyAropa apavAda is a unique traditional method of teaching rediscovered by Swami Sacchidanandendra Saraswati,. Swamiji observed that this method of teaching was adopted by Shankara BhagavadpAda from his Gita BhasSyā in 13.13.

According to this method, first super imposition on Self is mentioned and later on superimposition is negated. According to Swami ji, this method is consistent and is found in Upanishads, Gita and Brahma Sutra.

A separate page has been dedicated to explain this unique method of teaching taking help of Shankara B^r_iva.

Please visit adhvAropa apavAda - [A Consistent Traditional Teaching](#)

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Nirguna Brahman is formless and is stable, substratum of entire universe. It does not do any work of creation, sustenance and destruction. . Brahman along with maya becomes Ishwara. Bhagavan is maya pati and has upAdhi of maya. Bhagavan or ishrawa has 6 qaulities (ipaadhis). Nirguna Brahman is neutral. Also bhagavan is neutral when it comes to accepting sins and merits.

नादत्ते कस्यचित्पापं न चैव सुकृतं विभुः।
अज्ञानेनावृतं ज्ञानं तेन मुह्यन्ति जन्तवः॥5.15॥

5.15 The Omnipresent neither accepts anybody's sin nor even virtue. Knowledge remains covered by ignorance. Thereby the creatures become deluded.

Statements are made from different POV considering the mindset of questioner:

sarira bhAva, jiva bhAva and Atma bhAva

Sri Ramakrishna says,

Once Sri Rama asked Hanuman how he looked at him.

Hanuman Replied:

As a body, I am your das (servant) and you are my lord (master, prabhu)

As a jiva, I am ansha (part) and you are whole (purNa)

but from Tatva Jnana, hey RAma, I am you and you are me. We are not different.

Advaita talks from this third POV - Atma bhAva and not jiva bhava.

In advaita, there is no experiencer. So if you say that 'I am experiencing unity' , it is not ultimate state - advaita. You are still experiencing something, be it peace, bliss or oneness. You may be in visistadvaita, but it is not advaita.

Krishna taught both dvaita and advaita.

त्रिभिर्गुणमयैर्भावैरेभिः सर्वमिदं जगत्।
मोहितं नाभिजानाति मामेभ्यः परमव्ययम्॥7.13॥

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have indiscrimination; ebhih, by these; aforesaid tribhih, three; bhavaih, things, in the forms of attachment, repulsion, delusion, etc; and gunamayaih, made of the gunas, of the transformations of the gunas; na abhijanati, does not know; mam, Me; who am param, transcendental to, distinct, different; ebhyah, from these gunas as referred to above; and am avyayam, undecaying, i.e. free from all (the six kinds of) changes in things, viz birth etc. See note on p.38.-Tr.How, again, do they cross over this divine Maya of Visnu, constituted by the three gunas? That is being stated:

अव्यक्तं व्यक्तिमापन्नं मन्यन्ते मामबुद्धयः।
परं भावमजानन्तो ममाव्ययमनुत्तमम्॥7.24॥

Translation

7.24 The foolish think of Me, the Unmanifest, as having manifestation, knowing not My higher, immutable and most excellent nature. i.e. they think of me as a person with body

Hindi Translation by Swami Ramsukhdasji Maharaj:

बुद्धिहीन मनुष्य मेरे सर्वश्रेष्ठ अविनाशी परमभावको न जानते हुए अव्यक्त (मन-इन्द्रियोंसे पर) मुझ सच्चिदानन्दघन परमात्माको मनुष्यकी तरह ही शरीर धारण करनेवाला मानते हैं ॥7.24॥

Adi Shankara's commentary


7.24 Abuddhayah, the unintelligent, the non-discriminating ones; ajanantah, unaware; mama, of My; param, supreme; bhavam, state, My reality as the supreme Self; which is avyayam, immutable, undecaying; and anuttanam, unsurpassable; manyante, think; mam, of Me; as avyaktam, the unmanifest, the invisible; apannam, that has become; vyaktim, manifest, visible, at present At present, after being embodied as an Incarnation.-though I am the ever well-known God. They think so because they are unaware of My reality. This is the idea.What is the reason for their ignorance? This is being stated:

नाहं प्रकाशः सर्वस्य योगमायासमावृतः।
मूढोऽयं नाभिजानाति लोको मामजमव्ययम्॥7.25॥

Translation

7.25 Being enveloped by yoga-maya, I do not become manifest to all. This deluded world does not know Me who am birthless and undecaying.

Adi Shankara's commentary

7  Yoga-maya-samavrtah, being enveloped by yoga-maya-Yoga means the combination, the coming together, of the (three) gunas; that (combination) is itself maya, yoga-maya; being enveloped, i.e. veiled, by that yoga-maya, I am not become manifest to all by the world. The

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belongs to Me, does not obstruct the knowlege of Me who am God, the possessor of maya, just as the magic of any other magician does not cover his knowledge.' Since this is so, therefore-

Krishna was also a tyAgi and is also called as yogeSwara. Krishna showed other ways to reach him. Das bhava is not to only bhava to worship him and that you need be afraid of him. Hence Krishna is called a Jagat Guru. My prostrations and salutations to Jagat Guru Bhagavan Krishna.

There are two types of bhakti-s. This is explained by Shri Nithin Sridhar [here](#)

Both sides of coin has to be understood.

A jnani experiences niivikalp samadhi. But it is not over, as mind again rises from the dead (mano laya) and one enters into dvaita. But by repeated entering into samadhi, mind, which is nothing but thoughts and vasanas, is gradually destroyed (mano nasha). Now there is no mind. Mind of Jnani is brahman itself says Sri Ramana Maharshi. After one wakes from meditates or completes meditation, one sees that this world is also Brahman and not maya. He sees divinity everywhere. This may not be like a vision of Krishna (person) everywhere, but just divinity. Such a person is called jivan mukta. One day you began meditation. The which has beginning also has an end. There is no need to further meditate. The purpose of meditation and this life (human birth) is fulfilled.

Sri Ramana Maharshi called this as sahaj samadhi. Ordinary person do not return from nirvikalp samadhi and after 21 days, connection with body permanently drops. But Some may return into this world to teach bhakti and jnana and keep a pseudo ego of knowledge or bhakta like that of shankara, sukhdev, etc.

So, first is nirvikalpa samadhi and then it is savikalp saamdhi. (tat tvam asi and then sarvam khalu-idam brahman)

In yog and bhakti reverse is true. In yog, one experiences divinity everywhere (sarvam khalu-idam brahman, and later on reaches nirkikalp samadhi (source: <http://indiaspirituality.blogspot.in/2012/09/sahasrara-chakra.html> Index: <http://indiaspirituality.blogspot.in/2012/09/chakras-index.html>)

In bhakti, one keeps ego of 'I am bhakta' and later one even renounces this ego to merge into God losing his own identity says Sri Ramakrishna.

In simple words of Sri Ramakrishna, Nirakara brahman is like infinite ocean, pure water. But due to cold (❄️), it freezes and takes shape by becoming ice. Both water and ice are technically one and the same - water.

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e.g. fire (light) for lighting the room and heat for cooking food, but you will have to accept both, as you cannot separate light of fire and its heat.

Either side of Brahman (SaguNa and nirguNa) has to be experienced. Order is not important.

Madhusudan Saraswati is a perfect e.g. of harmony and he believed that Advaita is not for everybody and for masses bhakti (krishna bhakti) is the best.

Jnana, Advaita is not for everybody. But to progress in Jnana, bhakti is required. So bhakti is the foundation. Some say bhakti is for kids is a false notion. I would say, bhakti is the base. One must have a strong foundation.

Another name of Jnani is Brahma-niSTha (niSTha = firmness, steadiness, attachment, devotion) The one has firm faith in Brahman or rather one who is established in Brahman with firm faith is a Brahmanishtha

I would also like to say that bhakti has an edge that any class of people, pure / impure minded, intelligent / non-intelligent i.e. In general laymen (anybody) can practice and progress in spirituality.

Reason behind Shrutis, Smritis and Puranas praising one Personal deity

I always ask the question. WHY?

The reason is if you are told, that Krishna takes initiation from a sanyasin to chant the name of Shiva, your mind will think that if Shiva is supreme, then why not chant the name of Shiva. The attention is diverted. To make one one-pointed and to make one understand that Krishna is enough, you do not need to take refuge in any other God, Krishna is praised and the supreme personality. Makes sense right. Ganesh Purana, Brahman Purana, Shiva Purana, Devi Bhagavat all praise Gods as supreme.

Our shastras teach many ways to attain moksha. Each scripture glorifies its personal deity and object of worship.

Sri Ramakrishna says that, Bhagavan of bhakta, Brahman or Atman of Advaita and Paratman of Yogis is one and the same.

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After Understanding basic concepts of Advaita, let's us learn more about [PrakaraNa Granthas](#)

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- [viShNu and caturbhuja viShNu](#)
- [Siva-viShNu-abheda](#)
- [Clearing Accusations & Doubts](#)

Advaita in Shastras

- [Advaita in Shastras](#)
- [Brahman in Upanishads](#)
- [Concepts of Advaita in Shastras](#)
- [Random Quotes and Thoughts](#)

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- [Conspiracies by East India Co, Max Muller, Wilson, Jones and others](#)

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Works of Adi Shankara

- [Questioning Authenticity of works attributed to Adi Sankara](#)
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|| Hari OM ||

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